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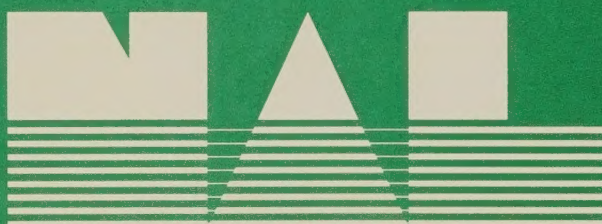
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# Evaluation of Expedited Service in the Food Stamp Program

## Volume I

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# EVALUATION OF EXPEDITED SERVICE IN THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

## Volume I

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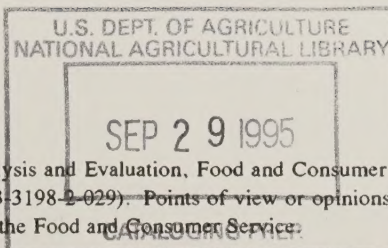
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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*Expedited service* is the administrative mechanism that allows the Food Stamp Program to provide rapid assistance to those applicants whose need for food is most urgent. Applicants processed under expedited service procedures are entitled, if they are approved for benefits, to receive their benefits within five days of applying, rather than the normal processing standard of 30 days. Since December 1987, four categories of households qualify for expedited service:

- households that have less than \$150 in gross monthly income and \$100 or less in liquid resources;
- households composed of destitute migrant and seasonal farm workers with liquid resources of \$100 or less;
- households in which all members are homeless; and
- households judged at risk of becoming homeless because their combined gross monthly income and liquid resources are less than their monthly housing and utility costs.

The Food and Consumer Service (FCS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the federal agency that administers the Food Stamp Program, sponsored a comprehensive study of expedited service that examined the 1981-1984 period.<sup>1</sup> Over the past decade, legislative changes and changes in the economic climate have raised concerns among State and federal officials and policymakers about expedited service provisions. Routine program information systems do not provide data on expedited service, and thus FCS has little information on how the patterns and practice of expedited service have changed.

This report presents the results of research conducted by Abt Associates Inc. under contract to FCS. The study involved collecting data in a nationally representative sample of 59 local food stamp offices, located in 25 States and the District of Columbia. Food stamp directors and staff were interviewed in each office, as were State-level program officials in each State. Data were extracted from case files for two samples of cases. The first sample,

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1. Linda Esrov, James Hersey, John Mitchell, John Moeller, and Mary Dent. *Evaluation of Expedited Services in the Food Stamp Program*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, and SRA Technologies, Inc., April 1987.

representing all households who applied and were approved for food stamp benefits between October 1991 and September 1992, includes approximately 4,500 cases. The second sample was drawn from cases applying and approved in August and September 1993 and comprises about 3,700 cases; cases in this second sample also completed a brief survey at the time they applied. Findings from this study are compared to those from the previous study to examine changes over the past decade.

**Somewhat more than one-third of all food stamp applicant households are designated to receive expedited service.**

During the 12-month period from October 1991 through September 1992, 35 percent of all households approved for food stamp benefits were given expedited processing.

The observed proportion of expedited service cases is not substantially different from the 34 percent rate found in the early 1980s by the last national study of expedited service. This result is somewhat surprising. The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 expanded the criteria under which applicants qualify for expedited service, and many observers felt that this added a large pool of applicants to the expedited service caseload. Others felt that the proportion of expedited service cases had grown during the rapid rise in the overall food stamp caseload during the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, the study does not find any major changes in the relative number of expedited service cases.

While the expedited service rate has not changed, the study does find that the actual number of applicants processed under expedited procedures has increased quite substantially. During the early 1980s, roughly 2 million households received expedited service annually. A decade later, almost 2.5 million applicants received expedited processing—an increase of 22 percent.

Expedited services are provided to a higher proportion of households in metropolitan than non-metropolitan areas, and the proportion is higher in large offices than small ones. Even in the small rural offices, however, more than a quarter of all applications receive expedited processing. Similar patterns were observed in the earlier study.



**About 10 percent of expedited service cases qualify solely under criteria established by the McKinney Act.**

The McKinney Act added two criteria under which households qualify for expedited service. The first is households in which all members are homeless. The second is households whose monthly shelter costs (housing and utilities) exceed their combined gross monthly income and liquid resources, who are considered to be at risk of becoming homeless.

The vast majority of applicants designated for expedited service processing qualified because they had less than \$150 in gross income and \$100 or less in liquid resources, which was the primary criterion existing before the McKinney Act. About 3 percent of expedited service households qualified solely because they were homeless, and 7 percent because their shelter costs exceeded their income and assets.

The McKinney Act is undoubtedly responsible for the relative stability in the expedited service rate. In the absence of the legislation, the rate would have been lower than observed in the early 1980s.

**Expedited service applicants tend to be in one-person households, to have no children in their households, not to be elderly or disabled, and to have very low incomes.**

The applicants receiving expedited service are not a monolithic group, but their aggregate profile clearly distinguishes them from regularly-processed cases. The most dramatic difference is that 56 percent of expedited service applicants are one-person households, compared to 33 percent of regularly-processed cases. A number of other differences are related to this one, such as the fact that expedited applicants are more often males and more often never married than regularly-processed cases. The two applicant groups are similar in racial/ethnic background, however.

Although the overall profile of food stamp applicants has changed somewhat since the early 1980s, the key differences between expedited and regular cases have remained the same. For example, female-headed households make up a larger proportion of all applicants in the current study than the previous one, but both studies show that the proportion of male-headed households is higher among expedited than regularly-processed cases.

The McKinney Act added too few households to the roster of expedited service cases to change its general profile. Nonetheless, the larger of the two McKinney groups—the

households with high shelter costs—looks quite different from the typical expedited service case. The households with excess shelter costs are predominantly multi-person households. Most are headed by women, and most include children. These households have higher incomes on average than other expedited service cases, but they have far higher average shelter costs—higher, in fact, than the shelter costs for regularly-processed cases.

**Expedited service cases tend to receive food stamp benefits for a shorter time than other cases, and once they leave the program they are somewhat less likely to re-apply.**

More than a quarter of expedited cases receive three or fewer months of benefits, and about half close in six months. On average, expedited service cases are estimated to receive benefits for 12 consecutive months, compared to 20 months for regularly-processed cases.

The data provide no evidence that expedited service cases "recycle" through the Food Stamp Program more than regularly-processed cases. About half of both groups have received food stamps at some time previous to their application. Once their cases close, the vast majority of households do not receive benefits within the next year. The re-opening rate is somewhat lower for expedited than regularly-processed cases (14 percent *versus* 18 percent).

**Expedited service cases generally face quite severe economic and living situations.**

Expedited service households have, on average, a monthly gross income of \$154 when they apply for food stamps, amounting to just 19 percent of the federal poverty standard for their household size. They have an average of \$22 in liquid assets. A third of them have no permanent place to live. In all of these dimensions, the circumstances of expedited service cases are substantially more difficult than those of the average regularly-processed case.

Although it is difficult to measure whether an applicant has an "urgent need" for food assistance, expedited service is generally provided to households with limited ability to provide food for themselves. Half of the expedited applicants report skipping meals in the past month because they lacked money, and a quarter obtained free food or meals within the past week. Many regularly-processed cases, however, are also needy according to these measures: more than a third skipped meals, and more than a tenth obtained free food or meals.

**Cases that qualify for expedited service under McKinney Act provisions face more severe circumstances than regularly-processed cases.**

By definition, households qualifying solely under McKinney Act provisions do not fall below the basic income and resource thresholds for expedited service. These households' average incomes are therefore substantially higher than the average for other expedited cases, but they are still well under the average for regularly-processed cases. Similarly, the McKinney households report less ability to provide food for themselves than regularly-processed households, but report somewhat fewer problems than the expedited households falling below the income and resource thresholds.

Many State and local Food Stamp Program managers feel that the McKinney Act provisions create inequities by giving expedited service to some households who are not the ones in most urgent need of assistance. The study findings indicate that this is not a problem *on average*—that is, the average McKinney household is more needy than the average regularly-processed household. However, because there is no simple and universal way to measure the urgency of a household's need, any expedited service criterion that attempts to approximate need will allow some inequities. Since the McKinney households generally face less severe circumstances than those who meet the traditional income and resource criteria, it is practically inevitable that the number of inequities has increased.

**Over three quarters of all expedited service cases are authorized for benefits within five days of applying, a substantial improvement over the last decade.**

Of those applications designated for expedited service processing, 76 percent have their benefits authorized within five days. This represents considerable progress from the situation measured in the previous study, which found 59 percent of cases processed within the five-day standard.

Success in meeting the five-day standard is greatest in the offices with the lowest proportions of expedited service cases, which tend to be the smaller and non-metropolitan offices. In addition, offices that organize their application processes so as to either conduct same-day interviews or to screen applicants before scheduling the certification interviews do a better job than other offices at meeting timeliness standards. The criteria under which



households qualify for expedited service are not closely related to the speed with which they are processed, however.

Most State and local officials who were surveyed consider it unrealistic to expect that all expedited cases can be processed in five days, although they support the general idea of a policy that provides benefits quickly to especially needy applicants. Many advocate extending the processing period to five working days or seven calendar days, although the data indicate that only a small percentage of cases are now processed in six to eight days. The available data do not indicate the reasons why 15 percent of all expedited service cases currently take more than ten days to receive their benefits.

**Pre-screening for expedited service, same-day certification interviews, and postponed verification help offices meet the five-day standard.**

Although five days is a relatively short time within which to process applications, some offices use procedures that apparently make the most of that time. Most screen all applicants before the certification interview to identify cases that may qualify for expedited processing, and put those cases on a "fast track." Many have instituted a policy of conducting the certification interview on the day the applicant first comes to the office, either for all applicants or for those referred for expedited processing. Offices using these procedures process a higher-than-average proportion of expedited cases within five days.

The Food Stamp Act allows offices to postpone much of the required verification of expedited service applicants' circumstances if this is necessary to provide benefits within five days. Cases whose verification is postponed are somewhat more likely than others to receive their benefits within five days.

**Although most applicants are correctly assigned for expedited or regular processing, about 18 percent are not.**

Based on data extracted from case records, it appears that 12 percent of all food stamp applicants would qualify for expedited processing, but are handled by regular procedures and do not receive their benefits within five days. Over half of these are households who do not fall below the basic income and resource thresholds, but whose shelter costs exceed their combined income and resources. It is unclear whether workers do not understand this aspect of the



expedited service rules as well as others, or whether they feel that these households do not need expedited processing.

About 5 percent of all applicants are designated for expedited service even though the information in their case record indicates that they do not qualify. Households with excess shelter costs are slightly over-represented in this group. The general pattern appears to reflect random human error rather than deliberate decisions to provide quick service to cases that narrowly miss qualifying.

### **Some verification is postponed for just under half of all expedited service cases.**

In 45 percent of the applications handled through expedited procedures, one or more items of verification is postponed.<sup>2</sup> The use of postponed verification appears to have increased since the early 1980s, when the previous study found 35 percent of cases to have postponed verification.

The increase in postponed verification may have contributed to the higher proportion of cases processed within five days. The gain in cases meeting the five-day standard, however, is greater than the increase in postponed verification.

Some offices postpone verification for nearly all expedited service cases, while others hardly ever use the technique. The offices most often using postponed verification tend to have smaller proportions of expedited service cases, lower caseloads per worker, and State policies requiring that expedited services be processed more quickly than the federal five-day standard.

A number of State and local officials argue for eliminating postponed verification entirely, or for restricting the types of items for which verification can be postponed. They feel that postponing verification opens opportunities for fraudulent applicants while adding to administrative cost and complexity.

The study findings indicate that the policy choice involves a tradeoff: postponed verification does help get benefits to households quickly, but it probably also slightly increases the payment of benefits to ineligible cases. Postponed verification does also require some

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2. Households may receive their initial issuance without completing all required verification. All verification must be complete, however, before they receive the next month's benefits.

separate administrative procedures that add complexity to office operations, but apparently do not add significantly to administrative costs.

**Cases whose verification is postponed often receive short certification periods.**

States are allowed but not required to assign one- or two-month certification periods to cases whose verification is postponed. It appears that workers apply this policy to about one case in three. About 36 percent of postponed verification cases are certified for one or two months, which is 16 percentage points more than the 20 percent rate observed for other expedited cases and 20 percentage points more than the rate observed for regularly-processed cases.

**Expedited service does not lead to substantial overpayment error, although some cases with postponed verification probably receive higher benefits than they should.**

While this study did not attempt to measure directly error associated with expedited service, it did examine several measures that serve as indicators of potential error.

Examining patterns of benefit change in the early months after initial issuance showed expedited cases that received postponed verification were more likely to experience early termination than either regularly-processed cases or expedited cases that did not have postponed verification (16 percent *versus* 9-10 percent). This suggests that expedited cases with postponed verification receive somewhat more benefits than they should.

The study estimates that this overpayment ranges between \$14 million and \$30 million a year. While the numbers reflect significant expenditures, they represent between 0.1 and 0.2 percent of total payments made to all active food stamp cases.

Few expedited cases that fail to complete their verification continue to receive benefits after the initial issuance, suggesting that local offices have established appropriate mechanisms to terminate cases that never comply with verification requirements.

**Expedited service does not affect the Quality Control error rate for regularly-processed cases.**

Some State and local program managers have expressed concerns that providing expedited service diverts resources from other cases, potentially leading to higher error rates

among those cases. To test this hypothesis, data from the Food Stamp Quality Control system were analyzed for the 59 local offices included in the study. No relationship was found between the proportion of expedited service cases in an office and the likelihood that a regularly-processed case from that office received benefits to which it was not entitled.

**Expedited service appears to have only small impacts on food stamp administrative costs.**

The most direct impact of expedited service regulations is that all applications must be screened to determine whether they should have expedited processing. Local office workers estimate that this task requires between 10 and 40 minutes, depending upon how the screening is done. This adds significantly to the total time that eligibility workers estimated for handling applications, which averaged 75 to 100 minutes.

The other notable impact results from the use of short certification periods for postponed verification cases, which can increase the total number of recertifications that will be performed for a case. Analysis indicates, however, that only 20 percent of cases with postponed verification (or 3 percent of all applicants) receive an additional recertification because they were initially assigned a one- or two-month certification period.

Expedited service does not appear to affect the length of the certification interview (apart from the screening task described above), nor does it substantially increase the frequency with which applicants' verification must be completed after the initial certification interview.





## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

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Expedited service is the administrative mechanism through which the Food Stamp Program (FSP) provides immediate assistance to households that have few resources to purchase food in the month they apply for benefits. Applicants processed under expedited service procedures are entitled to receive their food stamps within five calendar days of filing their application, instead of the normal processing standard of 30 days. Under current law, four categories of households qualify to receive expedited service:

- households that have less than \$150 in gross monthly income and \$100 or less in liquid resources;
- households composed of destitute migrant and seasonal farm workers with liquid resources of \$100 or less;
- households in which all members are homeless; and
- households judged at risk of becoming homeless because their combined gross monthly income and liquid resources are less than their monthly housing and utility costs.

In order to process applications within the mandated timeframe, the local office is allowed to suspend many normal requirements for verifying items of eligibility. The minimum requirement is that applicants must provide proof of identity before receiving their initial benefits. Workers must attempt to verify all items that can be verified within the allowed time, but may postpone any remaining items. Applicants must provide all outstanding verification before receiving a second issuance.<sup>1</sup>

Households applying after the 15th of the month, if they are entitled to expedited service, receive a pro-rated initial month's benefit and a full second month's benefit within the five-day timeframe. This provision ensures that households have adequate resources to purchase

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1. The one exception to this rule concerns migrants and seasonal farmworkers, who are allowed one additional month to provide verification from out-of-state sources. This exception can only be used once each season.

food the month they apply for benefits. Households applying before the 15th of the month receive a full or pro-rated benefit, depending on the day they file their application.

There is no limit on the number of times a household may be certified under expedited procedures. Before receiving expedited service, however, a re-applying household must complete all verification from the preceding expedited certification (or have been certified under normal procedures).

Expedited service procedures were first implemented in 1979. Since that time the law, and consequently the regulations, have undergone a number of changes. These changes—in the entitlement criteria, the processing standard, and operating procedures—have been designed to address concerns about equity and fairness, fraud and error, and administrative burden raised by officials and policymakers at all levels of government.

The Food and Consumer Service (FCS) published a comprehensive study of expedited service in 1987 that used data from the 1981-1984 period.<sup>2</sup> Since that time, a number of developments have occurred that led FCS to sponsor the current evaluation of expedited service provisions. First, the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 expanded expedited service entitlement to homeless households and to households that were in danger of becoming homeless because they lacked sufficient resources to cover their shelter expenses. The Act also significantly broadened the definition of a homeless household, to include not only individuals without fixed mailing addresses or permanent dwellings, but also those living in shelters and other similar institutions and those living temporarily with friends or relatives. States have raised concerns that the proportion of approved applicants entitled to expedited service increased markedly because of the McKinney Act. Many also believe that the groups added by the Act are more difficult to process accurately than other types of expedited cases.

Second, the economic downturn of the late 1980s led to a 34 percent increase in the food stamp caseload between 1988 and 1992, and also resulted in State budgetary cutbacks, both of which affected the local administration of the FSP. Many States have argued that expedited service policy adds a difficult administrative burden to already over-stretched systems.

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2. Linda Esrov, James Hersey, John Mitchell, John Moeller, and Mary Dent. *Evaluation of Expedited Service in the Food Stamp Program*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food & Nutrition Service, and SRA Technologies, Inc., April, 1987. We refer to this as the "1987 Study" throughout the report.

Finally, States have been faced with legal challenges for failing to meet expedited and general food stamp delivery standards, and thus FCS is interested in examining the factors that affect the timeliness of benefit delivery.

## Study Objectives

The overall objective of this study is to provide information to allow FCS to assess current expedited service operations at the national level. This project updates findings from previous studies and examines the impact of recent legislative and regulatory changes designed to improve expedited service. The study also responds to States' concerns with expedited service and presents the perspectives of State officials, local food stamp officials, and the advocacy community on the problems they are having with the implementation of expedited service and suggestions for ways to improve operations.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, the study:

- provides information on the number and characteristics of expedited service households and the nature of expedited service operations;
- examines the impact of the McKinney Act on expedited service households and operations;
- evaluates the extent to which expedited service operations achieve the intent of federal laws and regulations;
- examines the impact of expedited service on overall FSP administration; and
- identifies ways in which expedited service policy operations may be improved.

## Research Approach

The study is designed to provide precise and valid national estimates of the size and characteristics of the expedited service population and selected subgroups, and to compare key characteristics and processing outcomes for approved expedited service and regularly-processed

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3. In December 1991, FCS canvassed the States, through the Regional offices, to solicit their opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of expedited service policy. The States' responses to this unstructured survey provided insights into issues and concerns that are explored systematically and in more detail in the current study.



applicants.<sup>4</sup> In order to meet these goals, the sampling design involved a two-stage national probability sample of expedited and regularly-processed households.

In the first sampling stage, we selected 59 local food stamp offices to participate in the study.<sup>5</sup> In order to select the offices, all local food stamp offices in the 48 contiguous States and the District of Columbia were stratified along two dimensions. First, offices were grouped into three caseload size categories—small, medium, and large—defined so that one-third of all local offices fell within each category.<sup>6</sup> The second stratifier also divided offices into three groups: metropolitan offices with a high concentration of homeless applicants, other metropolitan offices, and non-metropolitan offices.

Within each stratum, offices were selected using systematic probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling, with monthly caseload as the measure of size. Using this methodology, larger offices within a stratum had a greater probability of being included in the sample than smaller offices. Data collected within the offices are weighted to take into account the sampling ratios.

Details of the second-stage sampling, which involved selecting samples of approved applicants, are discussed below.

**Data Collection Activities.** The study involved extensive data collection in the local offices selected for the study, including six related efforts:

- abstraction from client case file records of approved applicants;
- a self-administered survey of FSP applicants;
- a self-administered survey of workers involved in the application process;
- interviews with State food stamp directors or their representatives;
- interviews with local food stamp office directors and staff; and

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4. This study includes only those applicants who were approved to receive food stamp benefits. Denied applicants were excluded whether or not they were initially processed under expedited procedures.

5. We initially selected and recruited 60 local offices for inclusion in the study. However, one office dropped out of the study just prior to the start of data collection activities.

6. We excluded offices with monthly caseloads below 300 because they could not support the necessary cluster sizes of applicants. These offices accounted for only 0.81 percent of the national total caseload.

- interviews with representatives of client advocacy groups.

All data with the exception of the State interviews were collected by trained on-site field researchers in the local food stamp offices selected for the study; the State interviews were conducted over the telephone by Abt Associates staff. Data collection activities occurred between July 1993 and February 1994.

Exhibit 1.1 shows the types of information provided by the different data sources. It links the five basic study objectives to a more detailed set of research issues, and then shows which data sources provide the necessary information.<sup>7</sup>

By far the most intensive data collection activity involved *abstracting data from food stamp applicant case file records*. The case file abstraction provided data on whether applicants received expedited service, the characteristics of both expedited and regularly-processed food stamp applicants, and details of the application process necessary to assess expedited service operations. These data were central to addressing most of the study's objectives.

Two nationally-representative samples of approved food stamp applicants were drawn at this second-stage sampling. The first sample includes households that applied for food stamp benefits between October 1, 1991 and September 30, 1992, and the second sample includes those that applied during August and September 1993. Both samples are drawn from the 59 local offices included in the study.

The sampling frame for the 1991-1992 sample included all approved applicants who applied for benefits in the 59 selected offices. The States (and in some cases, the counties) participating in the study supplied these data. A self-administered survey of food stamp applicants (described in more detail below) provided the sampling frame for the 1993 sample.

In order to obtain samples of a size sufficient to conduct the required analyses, approved applicants were stratified into three categories—homeless, expedited but not homeless, and regularly-processed. Within each local office, we then drew a systematic random sample from each category. The final analysis sample includes 4,497 approved food stamp applicants who applied during fiscal year (FY) 1992, and 3,695 approved applicants who applied during the 1993 period. All applicant data are weighted to take into account their selection probabilities.

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7. Copies of the data collection instruments and additional information on response rates can be found in Appendix A.

**Exhibit 1.1**  
**STUDY OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH ISSUES, AND DATA SOURCES**

Study Objectives	Research Issues	Data Sources
The number and characteristics of expedited service households and the nature of expedited service operations	<p>Compare the characteristics of expedited service applicants and regularly-processed applicants</p> <p>Compare the characteristics of the service received by expedited service applicants and regularly-processed applicants</p> <p>Derive national estimates of the number and characteristics of applicants and the characteristics of the services received for expedited service versus regularly-processed applicants</p> <p>Estimate variation in applicant characteristics and services received for expedited service and regularly-processed applicants depending on the local office characteristics</p>	<p>Case file record abstraction; applicant survey</p> <p>Case file record abstraction</p> <p>Case file record abstraction; sampling weights</p> <p>Case file record abstraction; local office director interview</p>
The impact of the McKinney Act on expedited service households and operations	<p>Estimate how the number and characteristics of applicants vary depending on expedited service eligibility criteria</p> <p>Assess the extent to which current policy targets homeless households most in need of services</p>	<p>Case file record abstraction; local office director interview</p> <p>Case file record abstraction; applicant survey</p>
The extent to which expedited service operations comply with and achieve the intent of federal regulations and policy regarding timeliness and targeting of needs	<p>Assess the extent to which broadened eligibility criteria for expedited service affects timeliness of approvals under both expedited service and regular processing</p> <p>Assess the extent to which current expedited service policy targets the most needy applicants</p>	<p>Case file record abstraction</p> <p>Case file record abstraction; applicant survey</p>
The impact of expedited service on overall Food Stamp Program administration	<p>Assess the impact of expedited service on payment error</p> <p>Document the staff time required to process expedited service applicants and regularly-processed applications</p>	<p>Case file record abstraction; 1992 Food Stamp Quality Control Database</p> <p>Survey of workers; local office director interview</p>
Ways in which expedited service operations may be improved	Identify the common problems with current expedited service policy and identify potential changes in expedited service policies and procedures to improve the program	State food stamp director interview; local office director interview, survey of workers; local advocate group interview



The data collected from the two samples were similar, with two exceptions. First, for the FY 1991-1992 sample, FSP participation data were collected for each month between the date of approval and the date the abstraction was completed. Second, households in the 1993 sample completed a brief self-administered survey concerning their circumstances at the time they applied for food stamps.

The *applicant survey* served two purposes for the study. First, it provided the sampling frame from which the 1993 sample of applicants was selected. All persons applying for food stamps in the small and medium-sized offices, and a sample of persons in the large offices, were asked to complete the survey, which was attached to the application form. The eligibility workers reviewed the survey during the certification interview and entered information on whether the household was approved for food stamps and whether it received expedited service or was processed under normal procedures. Using this information, we selected the 1993 sample of applicants for the case file record abstractions.

It is not possible to compute a response rate as it is generally defined, since we do not know how many applicants entered our sampled offices during the study period. The number of forms we received, however, was substantially less than the number that would have been expected on the basis of the FY 1992 data. We have no way of knowing whether the differences reflect real changes in the flow of applicants through the offices, or reflect a refusal by applicants to complete the surveys, or a failure on the part of the offices to attach surveys to food stamp application forms or return completed questionnaires. We assume that the omissions were not systematic, and thus do not affect the validity of the sampling frame.

The completion rate of the surveys received was quite high. Ninety-seven percent of the 10,177 surveys of approved applicants were complete.

The survey also provided information about applicants' circumstances immediately prior to applying for food stamp benefits. Specifically, the surveys asked questions about:

- the events precipitating the food stamp application;
- difficulties the household was experiencing providing food for its members; and
- details of the households' living situation, particularly the situation of homeless households.

These data, which are not collected as part of the application process, enable us to better measure households' need for emergency food assistance.

The *survey of workers involved in the application process* also provided data to answer two distinct research questions. Workers provided estimates of the time required to perform key tasks in processing expedited and regular food stamp applications. These data are used to examine whether expedited service increases the costs associated with processing applications by increasing the amount of time workers are required to spend on certification tasks. The surveys also solicited the workers' perspective on the issues and problems with current expedited service policy and their suggestions for changes to improve the policy.

Sampling the workers to complete the self-administered survey involved first identifying all workers in the office involved in substantively important roles in the initial certification process. The sample design involved an initial cluster size of seven workers per office. All workers were included in those offices with seven or fewer workers. In the remaining offices, we stratified workers according to their role in the process, and randomly selected seven or eight workers to participate in the survey. We sampled 424 workers to participate in the survey. In total, 417 workers, or 98 percent of the sample, completed the survey. Worker data are weighted to take into account their selection probabilities.

The primary objective of the interviews with *State food stamp directors, local office food stamp directors, and local food stamp advocacy groups* was to obtain the perspective of these different individuals on the issues and problems with current expedited service policy and changes that would improve the policy.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the interviews with the food stamp officials collected information on State and local policies and procedures concerning expedited service. This information was used to measure how differences in office procedures affected expedited service operations, particularly the timeliness of benefit delivery, and to help interpret the quantitative findings. All individuals contacted completed the interview.

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8. The surveys asked officials to consider a number of specific issues about expedited service processing and potential changes to current policy. We constructed these lists from the State responses to the 1991 survey, mentioned above, that FCS conducted through the Regional offices. In the 1991 survey, States reported on the problems they experienced with expedited service. Their responses, which varied both in content and intensity, served as the basis for the lists developed for the current study. All State and local officials, food stamp workers, and advocacy group representatives were asked their views on the same lists of problems encountered and potential policy changes.



The *1992 Food Stamp Quality Control (QC) Database* provided the data for the analysis of the impact of expedited service on regularly-processed cases. The analysis sample included all active food stamp cases in the study sites that were identified as receiving regular processing. The expedited service rate in each site, computed from the record abstraction data, was attached to each individual record to enable us to examine whether regularly-processed cases in offices with high expedited service rates were more likely to have errors in their initial benefit determination than similar cases in offices with low expedited service rates.

## **Organization of the Report**

Chapter Two presents the descriptive analyses of the size and characteristics of the expedited service population. The chapter examines the demographic and economic characteristics of expedited service applicants and analyzes how they differ from the characteristics of regularly-processed applicants. It also examines whether and how the observed patterns vary depending on the size and location of the local office. The final issue addressed in the chapter is how participation patterns vary for expedited and regularly-processed applicants.

Chapter Three examines the impact of the McKinney Act on the size of the expedited service population by analyzing the criteria under which applicants qualify for expedited service. The chapter also analyzes how households' economic circumstances vary depending upon the criteria under which they qualify for expedited service. This analysis includes an examination of households' access to food and their living situations. The circumstances of homeless applicants are analyzed separately, focusing on differences between those homeless applicants who also qualified for expedited service because their incomes and resources were below the established limits and those who qualified for expedited processing solely due to the provisions of the McKinney Act.

Chapter Four examines two key indicators of the extent to which current expedited service operations are achieving the intent of federal laws and regulations—the timeliness of benefit delivery and the accuracy of applicants' assignments to expedited service processing. The chapter also examines the degree to which local offices utilize postponed verification and the assignment of short certification periods, two special provisions of the expedited service law designed to enable them to issue benefits quickly and to minimize fraud and error.



Chapters Five and Six examine the impact of expedited service on two specific aspects of FSP administration: the effect on payment error and the burden expedited service places on workers, respectively. Chapter Five assesses the likelihood of errors occurring in initial payments by examining the incidence of benefit changes and terminations within the first three months of program participation for both expedited and regularly-processed cases. It also analyzes the extent to which postponed verification has an effect on payment error to expedited cases beyond the initial issuance, and whether expedited service increases the errors to regular cases because of the resources that are diverted to expedited processing. Chapter Six measures the burden on workers by analyzing the relative time required to process expedited and regular applications.

The final chapter of the report examines the perspectives of the different groups involved in providing expedited service—State and local food stamp officials, food stamp workers, and advocacy groups involved with food stamp issues. The opinions of these different groups with respect to the problems with current expedited service policy and the changes they would recommend to the policy are examined in light of the study's findings.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EXPEDITED SERVICE CASELOAD

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This chapter begins the examination of expedited service by describing the households that are approved for benefits after receiving expedited processing of their applications.<sup>1</sup>

Routine national reporting systems in the Food Stamp Program (FSP) do not capture case-level information on whether applicants receive expedited service.<sup>2</sup> As a result, program managers have no current answers to such basic questions as how many applicants receive expedited processing, what kinds of households receive the service, and what happens to them after they enter the program. The special samples drawn for this study were designed in part to fill this information gap.

The study estimates that 35 percent of all approved food stamp applications in federal FY 1992 received expedited processing—only slightly greater than the proportion found in the previous study that used data from the early 1980s. The households receiving expedited service tend to be one-person households and households without children, and to have extremely low incomes. They tend to receive food stamp benefits for a shorter period than regularly-processed cases and, once their cases are closed, they are less likely to re-apply for benefits.

The remainder of this chapter presents these and related findings more fully. It begins with a review of the numbers and locations of expedited service cases, and then considers their household characteristics and their patterns of participation in the FSP.

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1. In this analysis, approved applicants are considered to have received expedited service if their case files indicate that they were designated for expedited service processing. Not all cases designated for expedited service actually received benefits in five days, and some received benefits in that timeframe without being designated as expedited service cases. Moreover, case records indicate that the assignments to expedited service did not always correctly implement the rules for expedited service eligibility. These issues are addressed in Chapter Four.

2. The Quality Control system, which draws a nationwide sample of active food stamp cases each month, contains some information on cases' expedited service status. State-to-State differences in the procedures for capturing this information make it difficult to describe expedited service cases accurately, however.

## **Prevalence of Expedited Service Among Approved Applications**

In the 12-month period from October 1991 to September 1992, 7.1 million households were approved to receive food stamp benefits nationwide. Of these, 35 percent, or 2.5 million, received expedited service (see Exhibit 2.1). In August-September 1993, the percentage of approved food stamp households receiving expedited service was higher, at 43 percent. Although the difference between these two estimates appears to suggest that the proportion of expedited service cases rose between 1992 and 1993, further analysis shows that no important increase occurred. The August-September period also saw a relatively high expedited service rate in 1992 (38 percent, as shown in Exhibit 2.2). The difference of five percentage points in the two August-September periods is not statistically significant. It thus appears that no major change in expedited service rates occurred between 1992 and 1993.

**Change in Expedited Service Rates Since 1984.** The previous national study of expedited service in the FSP found that the proportion of applicants receiving expedited service during the February 1983-May 1984 period was 34 percent. The current study's estimate of expedited service rate for October 1991 through September 1992 is 35 percent, which is not significantly different from the 1983-84 rate.<sup>3</sup>

While the data suggest that the percentage of food stamp applicants receiving expedited service has not increased in the last decade, the actual number of applicants processed under expedited procedures has increased quite substantially. During FY 1992, approximately 2.5 million households received expedited service. Adjusting the figures from the 1987 Study to reflect a 12-month period, instead of 16 months, shows that during the early 1980s, somewhat over 2 million households received expedited processing annually. Thus, the number of actual applications that were processed under expedited service increased by 22 percent during the last decade. This observed increase reflects the substantial growth in the overall food stamp caseload and does not, as discussed above, reflect increases in the proportion of applicants receiving expedited service.

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3. Because the August-September 1993 estimate of 43 percent reflects a seasonal peak, it cannot be compared meaningfully to the rates found in the 1987 Study. We do not have sufficient information to adjust the August-September 1993 estimate for seasonality, and the data from the earlier study do not allow us to isolate the August-September period.



Exhibit 2.1

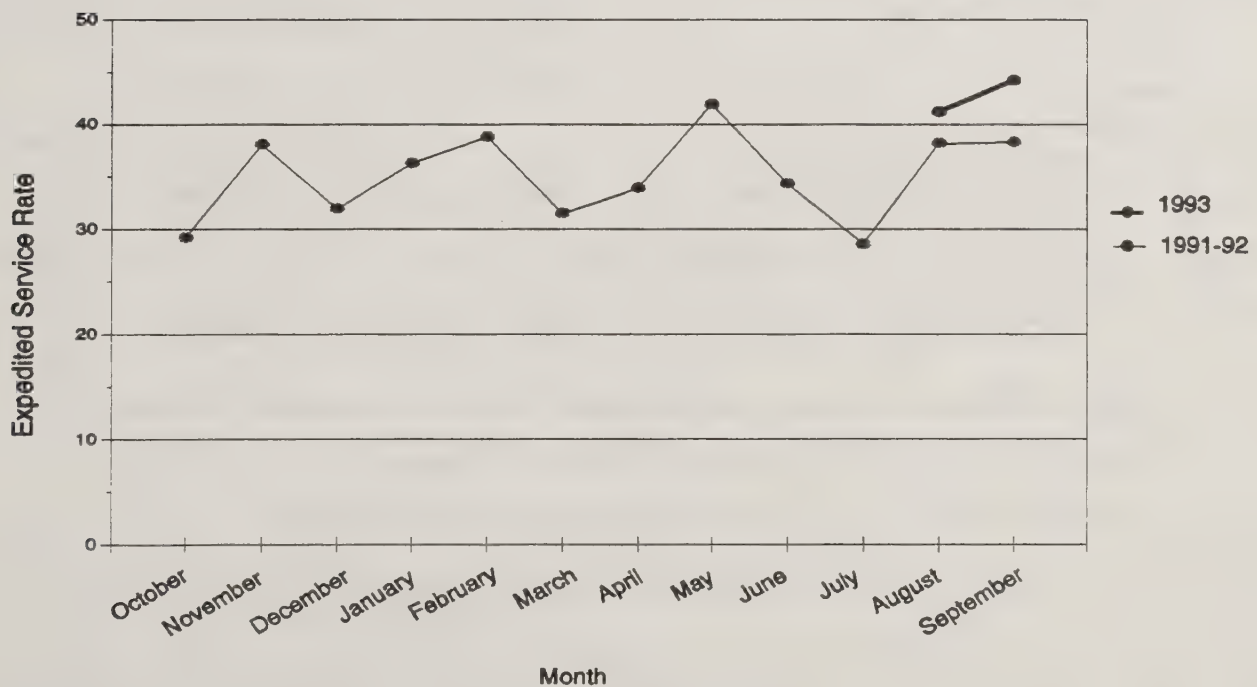
## EXPEDITED SERVICE STATUS OF APPROVED FOOD STAMP APPLICANT HOUSEHOLDS

	February 1983 - May 1984 <sup>a</sup>	October 1991 - September 30, 1992	August - September 1993
Total number of approved food stamp households	7,960,000	7,132,380	794,904
Number receiving expedited service (standard error)	2,710,000 (349,000)	2,485,603 (289,184)	338,744 (30,780)
Percent receiving expedited service (standard error)	34.0% (2.5)	34.9% (2.9)	42.6% (3.0)
Number regularly-processed (standard error)	5,250,000 (501,000)	4,646,777 (658,916)	456,159 (47,825)
Percent regularly-processed (standard error)	66.0% (2.5)	65.2% (2.9)	57.4% (3.0)
Unweighted N	2434	4497	3695

<sup>a</sup> SOURCE: 1987 Study; unweighted N refers to sample size for detailed case file abstraction.

Exhibit 2.2

## EXPEDITED SERVICE RATE: 1991-1993



**Differences by Office Size and Metropolitan Location.** A somewhat higher proportion of applicant households receives expedited services in larger offices than in smaller ones, as shown in Exhibit 2.3.<sup>4</sup> Small and medium offices have expedited service rates that are 8 to 9 percentage points lower than the rate for large offices in the 1991-1992 sample. Small offices have lower expedited service rates than both medium and large offices in the 1993 sample. The difference between small and large offices is statistically significant in the 1993 sample, but other differences are not statistically significant.

Exhibit 2.3

**EXPEDITED CASES AS A PERCENTAGE OF APPROVED APPLICANT HOUSEHOLDS,  
BY OFFICE CHARACTERISTIC**

	Expedited Cases as a Percentage of Approved Applicant Households	Number of Applicant Households Receiving Expedited Service
October 1991 - September 1992 <sup>a</sup>		
Large (2,593 or more cases)	37.9	1,676,387
Medium (1,049 to 2,592 cases)	30.1	688,420
Small (300 to 1,048 cases)	28.5	120,796
Metropolitan	36.0	2,169,893
Non-metropolitan	28.8	315,710
Total	34.9	2,485,603
August - September 1993 <sup>a</sup>		
Large (2,593 or more cases)	44.2	218,396
Medium (1,049 to 2,592 cases)	43.6	91,394
Small (300 to 1,048)	31.7*	28,954
Metropolitan	44.4	247,994
Non-metropolitan	38.4	90,750
Total	42.6	338,744

<sup>a</sup> Unweighted N = 4,497 for 1991-1992 sample, 3,695 for 1993 sample.

\* Significantly different from large at the 0.05 level, and from medium at 0.10 level.

4. All local offices in the continental U.S. were categorized into three equal groups according to the size of their average monthly caseload. The third of the offices with the largest caseloads served approximately 2,600 cases or more. The third with the smallest caseloads served about 1,000 or less. The study sample included 27 large, 17 medium, and 15 small offices. Offices serving fewer than 300 cases were not included in the sample.

Similarly, metropolitan offices have somewhat higher expedited service rates than non-metropolitan offices by 6 to 7 percentage points, though the observed differences are not statistically significant.

Because expedited service is often provided to homeless or destitute cases, it is not surprising to find higher rates in the larger offices in metropolitan areas.<sup>5</sup> In fact, it is interesting that the difference is not larger. Clearly, the circumstance that most commonly qualifies applicants for expedited service—having less than \$150 in income and \$100 or less in liquid resources—occurs for a substantial number of households in all types of locations.

The previous study also found similar differences in the expedited service rate in different-sized offices. The rate in large offices was 11 percentage points greater than the rate in either small- or medium-sized offices. The study did not examine the effect of office location on the expedited service rate.<sup>6</sup>

**Differences by Region.** The estimated percentages of applicants receiving expedited service vary substantially across the FCS administrative regions, as shown in Exhibit 2.4. Most of the observed differences are not statistically significant, however, and the regional patterns are not consistent over the two study periods.<sup>7</sup> Although some geographic concentrations of expedited service applicants may exist, there is no evidence that such concentrations follow the boundaries of the seven administrative regions.

## Characteristics of Expedited Cases

Among approved food stamp applicants, we expect expedited cases to have characteristics that differ from regularly-processed cases, reflecting their differential needs for program assistance. To explore these differences, we use the combined sample of October 1991-

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5. Among the 59 offices included in the study, 93 percent of the large offices are located in metropolitan areas. Some medium offices (41 percent) and small offices (20 percent) are also located in metropolitan areas, though most of them are in non-metropolitan areas.

6. See Appendix B, Exhibit B.1.

7. The sample was not designed to provide valid estimates by region; the number of offices within each of the seven regions is relatively small.



Exhibit 2.4

## EXPEDITED CASES AS A PERCENTAGE OF APPROVED APPLICANT HOUSEHOLDS, BY REGION

	Expedited Cases as a Percentage of Approved Applicant Households
October 1991 - September 1992 <sup>a</sup>	
Northeast	43.7
Mid-Atlantic	32.4
Southeast	29.7
Midwest	29.4
Southwest	24.0*
Mountain Plains	42.2
Western	52.4†
Total	34.9
August - September 1993 <sup>a</sup>	
Northeast	29.3§
Mid-Atlantic	53.3
Southeast	43.0
Midwest	37.8
Southwest	52.5
Mountain Plains	50.4
Western	41.9
Total	42.6

<sup>a</sup> Unweighted N = 4,497 for 1991-1992 sample; 3,695 for 1993 sample.

We have applied a simultaneous significance test across all 21 pairwise comparisons, with each pairwise comparison having to meet a significance level of  $\lambda/21$ , where  $\lambda$  is any given significance level.

\* Significantly different from Mountain Plains at 0.10 level and from Western at 0.01 level.

† Significantly different from Midwest at 0.05 level and from Mid-Atlantic at 0.10 level.

§ Significantly different from Southwest at the 0.01 level.

September 1992 cases and August-September 1993 cases. Separate analysis showed no important demographic differences between the two samples.<sup>8</sup>

**Demographic Differences.** The typical expedited service household is strikingly different from the typical regularly-processed case, as shown in Exhibit 2.5. A majority of expedited service applicants (56 percent) are *one-person households*, while most regularly-processed households include two or more people. Expedited service cases typically include *no*

8. See Appendix C, Exhibit C.1.

*children*. Only 38 percent of expedited service households include one or more children as well as one or more adults, but 61 percent of regularly-processed cases fit this description.

Given this basic difference in household types, it is not surprising to find a number of differences in the demographic characteristics of the heads of household. Compared to the heads of regularly-processed cases, the heads of expedited service cases are:

- more likely to be men;
- more likely never to have married; and
- less likely to be elderly.

Somewhat surprising at first glance is the fact that expedited cases are less likely to be *disabled* than regularly-processed cases. It seems probable that a substantial number of the disabled cases already have a source of income (SSI, for example) that is sufficient to disqualify them from expedited processing.

Despite these pronounced differences between expedited service and regularly-processed cases, about half of each group received food stamp benefits in the past. About a quarter of the expedited service applicants (or half of those with a previous food stamp spell) received expedited processing in their previous food stamp spell.<sup>9</sup> This suggests that some expedited service households may cycle on and off the food stamp rolls with little change in their basic economic circumstances. Alternatively, some of these applicants may have become savvy about the rules for qualifying for expedited service, enabling them to receive the service multiple times. Three quarters of the expedited applicants, however, are experiencing either their first instance of food stamp participation or at least their first instance of expedited processing.

The factors motivating individuals to apply for food stamp benefits are similar, whether they qualify for expedited or regular processing. This suggests that all food stamp applicants are facing similar pressures, though of differing degrees of severity.

The pattern of differences between expedited and regular cases observed in the present study and in the 1987 Study are very similar.<sup>10</sup> Although the demographic characteristics of

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9. Information on prior receipt of food stamp and expedited service, as recorded in applicants' case file. Reported data may underestimate the true values, particularly for applicants who received benefits in a different State.

10. See Appendix B, Exhibit B.2.

## Exhibit 2.5

**DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF APPROVED FOOD STAMP APPLICANTS:  
EXPEDITED SERVICE VERSUS REGULARLY PROCESSED**

	Expedited Service	Regularly Processed
<i>Characteristics of Household Head</i>		
Gender		
Male	45.0 %***	26.5 %
Female	55.0	73.5
Race		
White	55.8 %	55.3 %
African American	31.3	29.6
Hispanic	10.4	12.9
Asian	0.7	0.8
American Indian	1.5	1.4
Other	0.3 *	0.1
Age—mean	33 ***	36
< 18	2.1 %	2.3 %
18-24	23.1	21.1
25-34	35.5	32.9
35-44	23.9	21.8
45-59	13.3	12.4
≥ 60	2.2 ***	9.6
Marital status		
Never married	43.3 %**	29.7%
Married	21.0 ***	35.6
Divorced	16.4	14.4
Separated	17.2	14.2
Widowed	2.1 ***	6.1
Disabled	8.3 %***	15.8 %
Received food stamps previously	44.9 %	47.5 %
Received expedited service previously	21.8 %***	9.8 %



Exhibit 2.5 (cont.)

	Expedited Service	Regularly Processed
<i>Characteristics of Household</i>		
Size of household—mean	1.9 ***	2.6
1 person	56.2 %***	32.7%
2 persons	20.3	21.9
3-4 persons	19.2 ***	34.1
5 or more	4.4 ***	11.3
Household composition		
Single person, no children <sup>a</sup>	53.6 %***	30.9%
Single parent with children	27.0 ***	34.7
Married couple/parents with children	7.9 ***	20.6
Multiple adults, without children	3.4	2.6
Multiple adults, with children	3.1 **	5.5
Married couple without children	3.3	4.1
Other	1.7	1.7
Female-headed with children	24.4 %***	32.9%
<i>Main reason applied for food stamps<sup>b</sup></i>		
Work related	47.8 %	46.3%
Household changes	18.5	18.9
Health problems	12.4	13.0
Related to other income sources	11.5	11.4
Related to housing	6.4	5.8
Other	3.6	4.6
Unweighted N	5307	2885

<sup>a</sup> Missing data on household composition make this category not identical to one-person households.

<sup>b</sup> 1993 sample only; data from self-administered applicant survey.

\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.10 level.

\*\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.01 level.

food stamp cases as a whole have changed over time, the demographic characteristics of expedited cases relative to regular cases have changed little. For example, the proportion of female-headed households has increased over time, reflecting a nationwide trend, but in the present study as in the previous study, the proportion of female-headed households is significantly lower among expedited cases than among regular cases. It is likely that many female-headed households are receiving enough AFDC that they are ineligible for expedited service.

**Demographic Differences by Office Size and Metropolitan Location.** Large offices tend to have a somewhat different profile of applicants than small offices, and similar profile differences can be seen between metropolitan and non-metropolitan offices. Within each category of offices, however, we find the same general pattern of contrasts between expedited service cases and those subject to regular processing.

For example, one-person households account for almost half the applicants in large offices (46 percent), but a much smaller proportion in medium and small offices (34-35 percent), as shown in Exhibit 2.6. Within all three office sizes, however, the proportion of one-person households is nearly twice as great in expedited service as regularly-processed cases. Similar patterns emerge from a comparison of metropolitan and non-metropolitan offices, as Exhibit 2.7 shows.

**Differences in Employment Characteristics.** The recent work histories of expedited and regularly-processed applicants are quite different, as is to be expected given the expedited service objective of serving those applicants whose needs are most pressing. As Exhibit 2.8 shows, expedited applicants are far less likely to be employed at the time they apply for benefits than regularly-processed applicants (8 percent versus 26 percent). Almost half of all expedited applicants, however, and 40 percent of regularly-processed applicants worked in the year before applying for benefits. Thus, around 60 percent of both types of applicants have a fairly recent attachment to the labor force.

The jobs held by expedited applicants are not quite as good as those of regularly-processed applicants when measured along several dimensions. Expedited applicants are somewhat less likely to have:

- worked full-time;

## Exhibit 2.6

**DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF APPROVED FOOD STAMP APPLICANTS:  
EXPEDITED SERVICE VS. REGULARLY PROCESSED, BY OFFICE SIZE**

	Expedited Service	Regularly Processed	All
<b>Large Office</b>			
Characteristics of household head:			
Female (%)	152.0 ***	74.3	65.3
Age (mean)	33 ***	36	35
Non-white (%)	52.1	55.9	54.4
Employed (%)	6.4 ***	21.9	15.6
Disabled (%)	7.9 ***	15.0	12.1
Received food stamps previously (%)	46.3	52.1	49.6
Received expedited service previously (%)	23.1 **	12.9	17.6
Household composition:			
One-person households (%)	60.9 ***	36.5	46.3
Female-headed with children (%)	22.9 ***	36.4	30.9
Unweighted N	3616	1881	5497
<b>Medium Office</b>			
Characteristics of household head:			
Female (%)	62.0 ***	72.0	68.5
Age (mean)	33 **	36	35
Non-white (%)	32.3	32.4	32.3
Employed (%)	9.8 ***	30.6	23.4
Disabled (%)	8.7 **	14.8	12.7
Received food stamps previously (%)	39.1	38.4	38.6
Received expedited service previously (%)	18.7 ***	5.3	9.9
Household composition:			
One-person households (%)	46.2 ***	26.8	33.6
Female-headed with children (%)	28.4	27.9	28.1
Unweighted N	1246	681	1927
<b>Small Office</b>			
Characteristics of household head:			
Female (%)	55.9 ***	73.7	68.3
Age (mean)	33 ***	37	36
Non-white (%)	13.9	14.6	14.4
Employed (%)	10.0 ***	22.7	18.8
Disabled (%)	9.8 ***	24.3	19.9
Received food stamps previously (%)	55.2	53.9	54.3
Received expedited service previously (%)	23.2	11.8	14.9
Household composition:			
One-person households (%)	50.8 ***	28.5	35.3
Female-headed with children (%)	24.2	26.0	25.5
Unweighted N	445	323	768

\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.10 level.

\*\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.01 level.



## Exhibit 2.7

**DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF APPROVED FOOD STAMP APPLICANTS:  
EXPEDITED SERVICE VS. REGULARLY PROCESSED,  
BY OFFICE TYPE**

	Expedited Service	Regularly Processed	All
<b>Metropolitan</b>			
Characteristics of household head:			
Female (%)	54.4 ***	74.2	66.5
Age (mean)	33 ***	36	35
Non-white (%)	48.9	50.6	50.0
Employed (%)	6.9 ***	23.1	16.8
Disabled (%)	8.2 ***	14.2	11.9
Received food stamps previously (%)	42.7	46.0	44.7
Received expedited service previously (%)	21.5 ***	10.1	14.9
Household composition:			
One-person households (%)	57.8 ***	34.2	43.4
Female-headed with children (%)	24.5 ***	34.9	30.9
Unweighted N	4134	2048	6182
<b>Non-Metropolitan</b>			
Characteristics of household head:			
Female (%)	57.7 ***	71.1	66.5
Age (mean)	32 ***	37	36
Non-white (%)	24.3	24.5	24.5
Employed (%)	10.4 ***	30.1	23.4
Disabled (%)	8.4 ***	21.0	16.8
Received food stamps previously (%)	53.6	52.4	52.8
Received expedited service previously (%)	23.2 ***	9.0	13.6
Household composition:			
One-person households (%)	49.4 ***	27.6	35.1
Female-headed with children (%)	23.8 ***	25.7	25.1
Unweighted N	1173	837	2010

\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.10 level.

\*\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.01 level.

- worked the entire year prior to applying for benefits;
- received health insurance through their employer; and
- worked at their job for more than one year.

The hourly wage, and consequently the monthly earnings received by expedited applicants, are also somewhat less than those of other applicants, although these differences are not statistically

Exhibit 2.8

**EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS OF APPROVED FOOD STAMP APPLICANTS:  
EXPEDITED SERVICE VERSUS REGULARLY-PROCESSED<sup>a</sup>**

Characteristics	Expedited Service	Regularly-Processed
<i>Employment Status</i>		
Currently employed	7.6 %***	25.5%
Worked in past 12 months but not currently employed	49.1 ***	37.7
Did not work in past 12 months	43.3 *	36.9
Unweighted N	2208	1218
<i>Job Characteristics<sup>b</sup></i>		
Worked 11 or 12 months in past year	18.0 %***	31.3 %
Job tenure less than 1 year	66.3 ***	51.9
Worked 30+ hours per week	66.4	71.0
Received health insurance through employer	23.4 ***	34.3
Mean hourly wage	\$6.54	\$6.76
Mean monthly earnings	\$969	\$1,017
Unweighted N	1256	747

<sup>a</sup> Data from the self-administered applicant survey and thus available only for the 1993 sample.

<sup>b</sup> Includes only those who worked in last 12 months.

\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.10 level.

\*\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.01 level.

significant.

**Differences in Income and Resources.** Expedited services are intended to be provided to those applicants in most urgent need of assistance. One would therefore expect expedited service households to have lower incomes and assets than households receiving regular processing. The data bear out this expectation.<sup>11</sup>

Applicants receiving expedited services have an average monthly gross *income* of \$154, or a little over one quarter of the average recorded for regularly-processed cases (see Exhibit 2.9). Regular applicants are clearly poor, with incomes amounting to 59 percent of the federal

11. No important differences exist between the FY 1992 and 1993 samples, as Exhibit C.2 in Appendix C shows.

poverty level on average; but expedited service applicants are in even more difficult situations, as their incomes average just 19 percent of the poverty level.

Expedited applicants' lower earnings account for 60 percent of the difference in average gross income. Differences in Social Security account for 12 percent and "other" income for 10 percent of the overall difference. Expedited service cases also have lower amounts of income from AFDC, SSI and unemployment insurance. General Assistance is the only income source providing similar amounts of income to expedited service and regularly-processed applicants.

Some of the patterns of income reflect differences in the demographic composition of cases seen earlier. For example, since fewer expedited applicants are elderly or disabled, it is not surprising that fewer of them receive Social Security or SSI benefits. Similarly, with expedited service cases including a large proportion of one-person households, they are less likely to receive AFDC and more likely to receive General Assistance than regularly-processed cases.

Neither expedited nor regularly-processed cases have substantial *assets*, with average total asset values of \$60 and \$170, respectively (see Exhibit 2.10). Both groups have liquid resources that, on average, are below the \$100 limit for expedited service (under two of the four criteria). Even if non-liquid resources were included, most expedited cases would still fall below the \$100 limit.

Bank accounts are the largest single source of the difference in assets between expedited and regular cases. Only 10 percent of expedited service applicants have any bank accounts, compared to 24 percent of those regularly processed, and the \$66 difference in average bank account holdings accounts for almost two-thirds of the overall difference in assets.

*Patterns in shelter expenses* differ between expedited service and regularly-processed households in two ways, reflecting the criteria under which applicants can qualify for expedited service. First, homeless cases automatically qualify for expedited service, and consequently, expedited service cases are three times as likely as regularly-processed cases to have no shelter expenses at all (see Exhibit 2.11). On the other hand, households whose shelter costs exceed their combined income and assets also qualify for expedited service, and many of these households have quite substantial shelter costs. When these cases are averaged in with the others, we find that average shelter costs for expedited service cases are 72 percent of the average for regular cases, despite their having only about a quarter as much income as regular



Exhibit 2.9

**MONTHLY INCOME RECEIVED BY APPROVED FOOD STAMP APPLICANTS:  
EXPEDITED SERVICE VERSUS REGULARLY PROCESSED**

	Expedited Service	Regularly Pro- cessed
<i>Monthly Gross Income</i>		
Mean amount	\$154 ***	\$532
Percent with zero income	53.9 %***	14.3 %
Mean amount for those reporting non-zero amount	\$334 ***	\$621
Income relative to poverty level	.19 ***	.59
<i>Sources of Income</i>		
Earnings		
Percent receiving	13.0 %***	37.9 %
Mean amount (all cases) <sup>a</sup>	\$47 ***	\$272
Mean amount for those reporting non-zero amount	\$364 ***	\$720
AFDC		
Percent receiving	9.3 %	13.2
Mean amount (all cases) <sup>a</sup>	\$27 ***	\$41
Mean amount for those reporting non-zero amount	\$295	\$315
General Assistance		
Percent receiving	12.1 %	8.3 %
Mean amount (all cases) <sup>a</sup>	\$24	\$21
Mean amount for those reporting non-zero amount	\$199 ***	\$250
Social Security		
Percent receiving	1.7 %***	11.3 %
Mean amount (all cases) <sup>a</sup>	\$6 ***	\$53
Mean amount for those reporting non-zero amount	\$387 ***	\$471
SSI		
Percent receiving	2.4 %***	10.5 %
Mean amount (all cases) <sup>a</sup>	\$9 ***	\$35
Mean amount for those reporting non-zero amount	\$371	\$339
Unemployment compensation		
Percent receiving	3.6 %***	8.1 %
Mean amount (all cases) <sup>a</sup>	\$16 ***	\$45
Mean amount for those reporting non-zero amount	\$452 ***	\$563
Other <sup>b</sup>		
Percent receiving	8.7 %***	17.3 %
Mean amount (all cases) <sup>a</sup>	\$24 ***	\$63
Mean amount for those reporting non-zero amount	\$270 ***	\$363
Unweighted N	5307	2885

<sup>a</sup> Averaged across all cases; includes those with no income from this source.

<sup>b</sup> Includes, for example, child support, worker's compensation, veteran's benefits, money from relatives and friends.

\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.10 level.

\*\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.01 level.

## Exhibit 2.10

**ASSETS OF APPROVED FOOD STAMP APPLICANTS:  
EXPEDITED SERVICE VERSUS REGULARLY PROCESSED**

	Expedited Service	Regularly- Processed
<i>Total assets</i>		
Mean amount (all cases) <sup>a</sup>	\$60 ***	\$170
Percent reporting zero assets	80.9 %***	64.6 %
Mean amount for those reporting non-zero amount	\$313 **	\$481
<i>Total liquid resources (cash, bank accounts, other)</i>		
Mean amount (all cases) <sup>a</sup>	\$22 ***	\$96
Percent holding	17.0 %***	32.1 %
Mean amount for those reporting non-zero amount	\$128 ***	\$300
<i>Type of assets</i>		
Cash		
Percent holding	8.3 %**	13.0 %
Mean amount (all cases) (all cases) <sup>a</sup>	\$7	\$11
Mean amount for those reporting non-zero amount	\$80	\$84
Bank accounts		
Percent holding	10.3 %***	23.6 %
Mean amount (all cases) <sup>a</sup>	\$13 ***	\$79
Mean amount for those reporting non-zero amount	\$130 ***	\$334
Other liquid resources		
Percent holding	0.5 %**	1.7 %
Mean amount (all cases) <sup>a</sup>	\$2 **	\$7
Mean amount for those reporting non-zero amount	\$334	\$385
Vehicle (countable portion) <sup>b</sup>		
Percent holding	3.3 %	6.8 %
Mean amount (all cases) <sup>a</sup>	\$22 **	\$68
Mean amount for those reporting non-zero amount	\$685	\$1001
Other non-liquid resources		
Percent holding	0.2 %*	0.6 %
Mean amount (all cases) <sup>a</sup>	\$16	\$6
Mean amount for those reporting non-zero amount	\$8435	\$1032
Unweighted N	5307	2885

<sup>a</sup> Averaged across all cases; includes those with no assets from this source.

<sup>b</sup> Value of vehicle in excess of \$4,500.

\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.10 level.

\*\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.01 level.

cases. Thus, the overall pattern of shelter expenses reflects the inclusion of two quite different kinds of households in the expedited service caseload.<sup>12</sup>

### Exhibit 2.11

#### MONTHLY SHELTER EXPENSES OF APPROVED FOOD STAMP APPLICANTS: EXPEDITED SERVICE VERSUS REGULARLY PROCESSED

	Expedited Service	Regularly Processed
Total shelter expenses		
Mean amount (all cases) <sup>a</sup>	\$256 ***	\$354
Mean amount for those reporting non-zero amount	\$393	\$400
Percent reporting no shelter expenses	34.7 %***	11.2 %
Unweighted N	5307	2885

<sup>a</sup> Averaged across all cases; includes those with no shelter expenses.

\*\*\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.01 level.

The overall pattern of greater income and resources for regularly-processed cases can be seen in offices of all sizes, and in metropolitan and non-metropolitan offices.<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to note, however, that the income gap between expedited service and regularly-processed cases is greater in the non-metropolitan offices. For example, expedited service cases in non-metropolitan offices have lower average incomes than those in metropolitan offices, at \$117 and \$163, respectively (see Exhibit 2.12), but the pattern is reversed for regularly-processed cases. Average income for these cases in non-metropolitan offices is \$605, compared to \$510 in metropolitan offices. The main reason for this pattern is that regularly-processed cases in non-metropolitan areas are more likely to be employed and have substantially more earnings than those in metropolitan offices.

12. Chapter 3 (Exhibit 3.3) examines the shelter expenses of different types of expedited applicants in more detail.

13. See Appendix D, Exhibit D.1, for income, assets, and expenses by office size.



## Exhibit 2.12

**INCOME, ASSETS, AND SHELTER EXPENSES OF APPROVED FOOD STAMP APPLICANTS:  
EXPEDITED SERVICE VS. REGULARLY PROCESSED, BY OFFICE TYPE**

	Expedited Service	Regularly Processed	All
<b>Metropolitan</b>			
Monthly gross income:			
Mean amount	\$163 ***	\$510	\$375
Percent with zero income	54.0 %***	16.1 %	30.9 %
Income relative to poverty level	0.20 ***	0.57	0.43
Earnings:			
Mean amount	\$49 ***	\$258	\$176
Percent receiving	12.1 %***	35.9 %	26.6 %
Unearned income:			
Mean amount	\$114 ***	\$253	\$199
Percent receiving	35.8 %***	56.5 %	48.5 %
Total assets:			
Mean amount	\$58 **	\$139	\$107
Percent reporting zero assets	82.9 %***	69.0 %	74.4 %
Liquid resources:			
Mean amount	\$20 ***	\$80	\$57
Percent holding	14.9 %***	28.6 %	23.3 %
Total shelter expenses:			
Mean amount	\$276 ***	\$378	\$338
Percent reporting no shelter expenses	33.3 %***	10.9 %	19.66 %
Unweighted N	4134	2048	6182
<b>Non-Metropolitan</b>			
Monthly gross income:			
Mean amount	\$117 ***	\$605	\$438
Percent with zero income	53.5 %***	8.4 %	23.8 %
Income relative to poverty level	0.14 ***	0.67	0.49
Earnings:			
Mean amount	\$40 ***	\$324	\$227
Percent receiving	16.6 %***	44.6 %	35.0 %
Unearned income:			
Mean amount	\$77 ***	\$280	\$211
Percent receiving	32.7 %***	61.2 %	51.4 %
Total assets:			
Mean amount	\$66 ***	\$280	\$207
Percent reporting zero assets	72.2 %***	49.3 %	57.1 %
Liquid resources:			
Mean amount	\$30 ***	\$152	\$110
Percent holding	25.9 %***	44.4 %	38.1 %
Total shelter expenses:			
Mean amount	\$174 ***	\$272	\$238
Percent reporting no shelter expenses	40.5 %***	12.2 %	21.9 %
Unweighted N	1173	837	2010

\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.10 level.

\*\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.01 level.

## Benefit Receipt and Caseload Dynamics<sup>14</sup>

The differences in case characteristics between expedited and regularly-processed cases are reflected in their initial allotments and subsequent benefit receipt. On the one hand, expedited service cases are smaller, which would tend to decrease their allotments. On the other hand, they have less income, which would tend to increase their allotments. The net effect of these two factors is that expedited service households receive initial allotments that are slightly larger than the average for regularly-processed cases—\$160 *versus* \$157. On a per capita basis, however, expedited service cases receive substantially larger initial allotments—\$94 per person *versus* \$66.

As discussed below, expedited service cases differ from regularly-processed cases in that they have substantially shorter spells of food stamp receipt. Furthermore, they are less likely to return to the program after leaving. In the months in which they are active, however, they receive essentially the same benefit amount as regularly-processed cases.

**Length of Spell.**<sup>15</sup> Expedited service cases are substantially more likely to terminate quickly than other cases. For example, 29 percent of expedited service cases, but only 17 percent of regularly-processed cases, close within three months (Exhibit 2.13). After the third month, the percentage closing in each month is roughly similar for expedited service and regularly-processed cases. Only 14 percent of expedited service cases remain open continuously

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14. Information on benefit receipt and case status was collected on all sample members for up to 23 months from the month they were approved until the month the case file record abstraction was completed. Thus, fewer months of data were available for cases in the 1993 sample than those in the FY 1992 sample. Because cases applying after the 15th of the month receive an initial allotment that covers both the first and second months of the certification period, we cannot begin to analyze case activity consistently for all cases until the third month of activity. Starting from the third month of benefit receipt, we had a (weighted) average of 6.4 months of data for the 1993 sample and a (weighted) averaged of 19.3 months for the FY 1992 sample. For both subsamples combined, the mean number of months observed from the third month on was 14.1.

15. The distributions of spell lengths were obtained via weighted survival analysis. As discussed in the previous footnote, we cannot distinguish between closure after one month and closure after two months. The mean spell lengths were calculated based on the assumptions that (a) half of all cases that closed within the first two months closed after one month, and (b) the hazard rate for Months 24 and beyond was a constant for each type of case, equal to its average value in Months 13 through 23.

for two years or more, compared with 29 percent of regular cases. The mean spell lengths for the two groups of cases are 12 months and 20 months, respectively.<sup>16</sup>

These shorter spell lengths for expedited service cases are consistent with several possible interpretations. One possibility is that a substantial number of these cases are in quite volatile economic situations, and their need for assistance is short-lived. Another possibility is that certain cases, such as homeless households, lose touch with the food stamp agency or simply cannot get themselves sufficiently organized to appear for recertification. A third possible interpretation is that some cases take advantage of the limited verification entailed in expedited services, fraudulently receiving benefits until they are terminated for failure to provide verification. The data do not allow us to know how many cases conform to these various models.

**Case Activity.** As well as closing more quickly, expedited service cases reopen somewhat more slowly. The proportion of closed cases that reopened within 12 months of closure was 14 percent for expedited service cases and 18 percent for regularly-processed cases (Exhibit 2.14).<sup>17</sup> Negligible differences were seen for reopenings within two and six months of closure.

16. The distribution of lengths of completed spells of food stamp receipt was also calculated in Nancy R. Burstein, *Dynamics of the Food Stamp Program as Reported in the Survey of Income and Program Participation*, Report to the Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Abt Associates Inc., Cambridge MA (1993). Burstein's results were based on self-reported rather than administrative data, and pertain to a much earlier time period (1983-1986). Comparing the last columns of Exhibit 2.13 with corresponding information in Burstein (1993), we see the following patterns:

	SIPP Data 1983-1986	Administrative Data 1991-1993
Median length of completed spells	6 months	8 months
Mean length of completed spells	21 months	17 months
Proportion of spells ending within 12 months	67 percent	62 percent
Proportion of spells lasting two years or more	20 percent	24 percent

Burstein's results are broadly similar to those shown here for expedited and regular cases combined, though there is some suggestion that spell lengths are somewhat longer in the 1991-1993 period than in the 1983-1986 period.

17. These proportions were calculated based on those cases that closed at least 13 months before the end of the observation period.



## Exhibit 2.13

**DISTRIBUTION OF LENGTH OF FIRST OBSERVED SPELL OF APPROVED FOOD STAMP APPLICANTS:  
EXPEDITED SERVICE VERSUS REGULARLY-PROCESSED**

Months	Expedited Service		Regular Cases		All Cases	
	Probability of closure	Cumulative probability of closure	Probability of closure	Cumulative probability of closure	Probability of closure	Cumulative probability of closure
1-2	16.0%	16.0%	8.1%	8.1%	11.2%	11.2%
3	12.6	28.6	9.1	17.2	10.4	21.6
4	8.3	36.8	6.0	23.2	6.8	28.3
5	5.8	42.6	6.0	29.2	5.9	34.2
6	7.8	50.5	8.5	37.6	8.2	42.5
7	5.6	56.1	4.7	42.4	5.0	47.4
8	3.3	59.3	3.3	45.7	3.3	50.7
9	3.7	63.0	1.7	47.4	2.4	53.1
10	2.5	65.6	2.8	50.2	2.7	55.8
11	1.6	67.1	3.3	53.5	2.7	58.5
12	4.4	71.5	3.8	57.3	4.0	62.4
13-18	9.3	80.9	9.2	66.5	9.3	71.7
19-23	4.7	85.6	4.8	71.3	4.8	76.5
24 or more	14.4%	100.0%	28.7%	100.0%	23.5%	100.0%
Mean	11.6		20.2		16.6	
Median	6		10		8	

Exhibit 2.14

**PROPORTION OF CLOSED CASES RETURNING  
TO THE FOOD STAMP CASELOAD**

	Expedited Service	Regular Cases
Proportion of closures lasting no longer than:		
2 months (Unweighted N)	8.6% (2915)	8.9% (1177)
6 months (Unweighted N)	13.6 (2778)	14.6 (1101)
12 months (Unweighted N)	14.4 (2386)	18.3 (848)

Expedited and regular cases were almost identical in the number of spells of food stamp receipt that they were likely to experience. The great majority of cases (89.8 and 91.2 percent, respectively) had only one spell; nearly all of the remaining cases (8.7 percent and 7.4 percent, respectively) had two spells. Among later spells, those cases that originally were expedited were substantially more likely to reopen as expedited cases than those that originally received regular service (61 percent *versus* 21 percent).<sup>18</sup>

Because of the shorter initial spell length and the lower rate of recidivism, expedited service cases were active for relatively fewer months than regularly-processed cases. Expedited cases were active for 34.9 percent of the time for which they were observed, compared with 49.8 percent for regularly-processed cases. The average (non-zero) benefit after the first two months, however, was \$164 for both types of cases, indicating that for the months they were active, expedited and regularly-processed cases received similar allotments on average.

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18. These percentages are based on those cases for whom status at reopening was known—483 expedited service and 174 regularly-processed cases. Information on status at reopening was missing for 32 percent of expedited service and 38 percent of regularly-processed cases.

## **Summary**

During the 12-month period from October 1991 through September 1992, the study estimates that 35 percent of all applications approved for food stamp benefits were given expedited processing. This rate is similar to the 34 percent rate estimated by the 1987 Study for February 1983-May 1984. While the proportion of applications processed under expedited service rules has not changed dramatically in the last decade, the actual number of households receiving expedited processing has increased quite substantially due to the overall increases in the food stamp caseload. During FY 1992, 2.5 million households received expedited service, a 22 percent increase from the early 1980s, when an estimated 2 million households received expedited service each year.

Many observers believe that the McKinney Act, by expanding the categories of cases eligible for expedited service, substantially increased the proportion of cases receiving expedited service. Furthermore, with the explosive growth of the food stamp caseload as a whole in the late 1980s and early 1990s, one might expect some fundamental change in the type of expedited service cases. It appears, however, that these factors caused no profound change in either the proportion of applicants who receive expedited processing or the profile of these cases. The current study finds, as did the 1987 Study, that expedited service applicants tend to be:

- one-person households and households without children;
- not elderly or disabled;
- in much more severe financial circumstances than regularly-processed cases; and
- somewhat more prevalent in offices located in metropolitan areas and offices with large caseloads.

After expedited service cases begin receiving food stamp benefits, they tend to leave the program somewhat more quickly than regularly-processed cases. Once the expedited service cases close, they are somewhat less likely to re-apply for benefits, at least within the next year. Thus, expedited service cases have more fleeting contact with the FSP than other cases, on average, even though they were in more severe financial circumstances when they initially applied for benefits.





## CHAPTER THREE

### EXPEDITED SERVICE ENTITLEMENT CRITERIA

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One challenge faced by policymakers in designing the laws and regulations concerning expedited service has been to define the types of households entitled to receive expedited service. The intent of policymakers is clear—to serve quickly those in most urgent need of assistance. Defining "neediness," however, is a more difficult issue.

Under current law, four categories of households are entitled to receive expedited service:

- households that have less than \$150 in gross monthly income and \$100 or less in liquid resources;
- households composed of destitute migrant and seasonal farm workers with liquid resources of \$100 or less;
- households in which all members are homeless; and
- households whose combined gross monthly income and liquid resources are less than their monthly housing and utility costs.

The latter two criteria were added by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 as part of a broader effort to provide needed services to homeless households. The intent of the Act with respect to the Food Stamp Program (FSP) was to provide immediate food stamp benefits to the homeless and those households at risk of becoming homeless because they lack sufficient resources to cover their shelter expenses.

The McKinney Act also significantly broadened the definition of a homeless household to include not only individuals without fixed mailing addresses or permanent dwellings, but also those living in shelters and other similar institutions and those living temporarily with friends or relatives.

Many officials believe that the groups added by the McKinney Act substantially increased the number of cases processed under expedited service. In addition, some have expressed concerns that expedited service is no longer targeted to those households with the most

urgent need for emergency assistance. In particular, they worry that the broad homeless definition established by the McKinney Act includes persons who are not truly homeless.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter examines the effect of the McKinney Act on the size of the expedited service caseload by analyzing the criteria under which applicants qualify for expedited service. We also examine various household characteristics in order to determine whether the households currently receiving expedited service are indeed those most in urgent need. Chapter Two has already shown that households receiving expedited service have less income and fewer resources than regularly-processed households. The question addressed here is whether households qualifying for expedited service under different criteria exhibit any differences in their need for immediate assistance.

### **Expedited Service Entitlement Criteria**

As discussed above, households may qualify for expedited service under any of four criteria. Exhibit 3.1 shows the distribution of expedited cases, by entitlement criteria for the 1991-1993 period.<sup>2</sup>

The analyses presented in this section are based solely on the classification(s) recorded in the case file. The analysis does not "second guess" the worker's classification by examining, for example, the recorded amounts of income and resources. Chapter Four looks more closely at the accuracy of the expedited service classification.

For over half of all expedited service cases, the case file indicated that the case met two or more of the criteria for expedited processing. It is quite possible that some additional cases met more than one criterion, but that the worker recorded only one in the case file. Thus, the percentage of applicants shown as qualifying for expedited service under any given criterion represents a lower bound.

The first column of Exhibit 3.1 shows a duplicated distribution in which some households appear in more than one category. The total thus sums to more than 100 percent.

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1. Survey of State officials conducted by FCS in 1991.

2. We also examined the distributions for 1991-1992 and 1993 separately and found that they were virtually identical. See Appendix C, Exhibit C.3.



## Exhibit 3.1

**APPROVED APPLICANTS RECEIVING EXPEDITED SERVICE,  
BY ENTITLEMENT CRITERIA**

Entitlement Criteria	Percentage Distribution of Approved Applicants Receiving Expedited Service	
	Duplicated	Unduplicated
Monthly income/resources below limits	90.3%	90.3%
Destitute migrant/seasonal worker	1.7	0.1
"McKinney criteria"		
Homeless	24.3	2.5
Shelter expenses exceed income/resources	<u>55.8</u>	<u>7.1</u>
Total	> 100.0%	100.0%
Unweighted N	5234	5234

The second column is unduplicated. Each case appears in only one category—the first identified category in the order listed. The total of this column sums to 100 percent.

Fully 90 percent of all expedited service cases qualify because their income and resources are below the established limits. Thus, most households receiving expedited service have very little money available with which to purchase food.

Destitute migrants and seasonal farmworkers comprise a small percentage of the expedited service caseload—2 percent. Most also qualify for expedited service based on the income/resources criterion, however.

Of special interest are the households qualifying for expedited service because of the McKinney Act. Overall, a substantial number of expedited service cases are homeless (24 percent) or appear at risk of becoming homeless (56 percent). Most of these households, however, also have income and resources below the established guidelines, and thus would have qualified for expedited service prior to the McKinney Act.

Only 10 percent of those households qualifying for expedited service can be regarded as "McKinney" cases, meaning that they qualify for expedited service only because of the McKinney Act provisions. Most of these cases are not homeless (2.5 percent), but are considered in danger of becoming homeless (7.1 percent) because their shelter costs exceed their income and liquid resources.

We conclude that the McKinney Act added a substantial, though not overwhelming, number of cases to the expedited service caseload. In fact, the McKinney Act is responsible for the stability in the expedited service rate observed over the past decade. Without the McKinney Act, the rate would have decreased to approximately 31 percent.

**Differences by Office Characteristics.** The McKinney Act appears to have had larger impacts in some areas, though none of the observed differences are statistically significant (see Exhibit 3.2).<sup>3</sup> In the Northeast, 21 percent of all expedited cases qualified solely because of the Act's provisions. Five percent of the expedited caseload were homeless households that did not meet the income and resources criterion, and 16 percent had excess shelter expenses. The Northeast also has an expedited service rate above the national average, probably due in part to the additions to the expedited caseload resulting from the McKinney Act (see Exhibit 2.4). The McKinney Act also seems to have had a relatively large impact in the Midwest—18 percent of the expedited caseload qualified because of its provisions. Even though the McKinney Act had a substantial impact in the region, its expedited service rate remains below the national average.

The McKinney Act had the smallest impacts in the Mid-Atlantic and Western regions. Only 4-5 percent of all expedited cases can be classified as "McKinney" cases. Despite the relatively small addition to the expedited service caseload in the Western region, the expedited service rate is substantially above the national average. In contrast, the expedited service rate in the Mid-Atlantic is below the national average.

The impacts of the McKinney Act did not vary significantly depending on the size of the office or whether it was located in a metropolitan or non-metropolitan area (see Exhibits D.2 and D.3).

### **Relative Need for Expedited Service**

Households qualifying for expedited service differ from regularly-processed households on a number of dimensions, as Chapter Two showed. Program rules mean that most expedited cases are in worse financial situations than regular cases, and the data show that expedited cases

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3. Statistical significance was calculated applying a simultaneous 0.10 level of significance across all 21 pairwise tests.

**Exhibit 3.2**  
**EXPEDITED SERVICE ENTITLEMENT CRITERIA,**  
**BY REGION**

Entitlement Criteria	Percentage Distribution of Approved Applicants Receiving Expedited Service	
	Duplicated	Unduplicated
<i>Northeast</i>		
Monthly income/resources below limits	79.1%	79.1%
Destitute migrant/seasonal worker	0.0	0.0
"McKinney criteria"		
Homeless	21.3	4.5
Shelter expenses exceed income/resources	<u>75.4</u>	<u>16.4</u>
Total	> 100.0%	100.0%
Unweighted N	611	611
<i>Mid-Atlantic</i>		
Monthly income/resources below limits	95.7%	95.7%
Destitute migrant/seasonal worker	0.7	0.0
"McKinney criteria"		
Homeless	31.0	2.9
Shelter expenses exceed income/resources	<u>48.3</u>	<u>1.5</u>
Total	> 100.0%	100.0%
Unweighted N	795	795
<i>Southeast</i>		
Monthly income/resources below limits	92.7%	92.7%
Destitute migrant/seasonal worker	5.3	0.4
"McKinney criteria"		
Homeless	13.6	0.5
Shelter expenses exceed income/resources	<u>57.2</u>	<u>6.5</u>
Total	> 100.0%	100.0%
Unweighted N	1368	1368



Exhibit 3.2 (cont.)

Entitlement Criteria	Percentage Distribution of Approved Applicants Receiving Expedited Service	
	Duplicated	Unduplicated
<i>Midwest</i>		
Monthly income/resources below limits	81.7%	81.7%
Destitute migrant/seasonal worker	0.1	0.0
"McKinney criteria" Homeless	15.8	2.3*
Shelter expenses exceed income/resources	<u>54.3</u>	<u>16.0*</u>
Total	> 100.0%	100.0%
Unweighted N	641	641
<i>Southwest</i>		
Monthly income/resources below limits	91.3%	91.3%
Destitute migrant/seasonal worker	1.4	0.0
"McKinney criteria" Homeless	32.2	1.9
Shelter expenses exceed income/resources	<u>36.8</u>	<u>6.8</u>
Total	> 100.0%	100.0%
Unweighted N	455	455
<i>Mountain Plains</i>		
Monthly income/resources below limits	90.6%	90.6%
Destitute migrant/seasonal worker	0.4	0.0
"McKinney criteria" Homeless	37.1	5.7
Shelter expenses exceed income/resources	<u>41.3</u>	<u>3.8</u>
Total	> 100.0%	100.0%
Unweighted N	531	531
<i>Western</i>		
Monthly income/resources below limits	94.8%	94.8%
Destitute migrant/seasonal worker	1.0	0.1
"McKinney criteria" Homeless	27.3	1.2
Shelter expenses exceed income/resources	<u>66.7</u>	<u>3.9</u>
Total	> 100.0%	100.0%
Unweighted N	833	833

have far less income and resources than regularly-processed cases. Several-fold differences exist in the average amounts of earned income, unearned income, and assets.

The issue addressed in this section is whether expedited service cases differ on these measures depending upon the criteria under which they qualify for expedited service. In particular, we are interested in whether McKinney cases differ from other expedited cases in ways that would suggest they are more or less needy than other cases.

Although this analysis is intended to provide information on applicants' need for expedited service, it does not employ an absolute definition of "need." Rather, we examine a number of measures that describe the severity of the applicants' circumstances, including their financial situation and their own reports of their eating and housing situations. In general, it is reasonable to assume that people have more need for expedited service when they have lower incomes, more frequent incidents of food insufficiency, and less stable housing arrangements. The analysis therefore compares the various applicant groups on these dimensions, but it makes no attempt to determine whether any particular group does not actually need expedited service.

**Economic and Demographic Characteristics.** Exhibit 3.3 shows the characteristics of expedited service cases by entitlement criteria. This exhibit uses the "unduplicated" criteria shown in Exhibit 3.1. This means that all cases qualifying for expedited service because their income and resources are below the established limits, whether or not they qualify under other criteria as well, are grouped together. Destitute migrant and seasonal farmworkers are not shown separately, because the sample size is too small to provide valid estimates. The homeless cases and those whose shelter expenses exceed their income and liquid resources are households that qualify for expedited service only under the McKinney Act provisions. We also present the characteristics of regularly-processed cases for comparison.

Households qualifying for expedited service on the basis of their *income and resources* comprise 90 percent of all expedited service cases. Their income and resources are extremely limited. The households' average monthly income is \$125 and their liquid resources average

## Exhibit 3.3

### CHARACTERISTICS OF APPROVED APPLICANTS RECEIVING EXPEDITED SERVICE, BY ENTITLEMENT CRITERIA

	Expedited Service Criteria (unduplicated) <sup>a</sup>			Regularly-processed applicants
	Monthly income/resources below limits	Homeless	Shelter expenses exceed income/resources	
<b>Monthly gross income:</b>				
Mean amount	\$125	\$225	\$394 ***	\$532
Percent with zero income	58.4 %	46.0 %	8.6 %***	14.3 %
Income relative to poverty line	0.16	0.30 *	0.47 ***	0.59
<b>Earnings:</b>				
Mean amount	\$33	\$114 **	\$139 ***	\$273
Percent receiving	10.1 %	29.3 %**	36.0 %***	37.9 %
<b>Unearned income:</b>				
Mean amount	\$92	\$111	\$255 ***	\$259
Percent receiving	33.2 %	27.9 %	60.4 %***	57.6 %
<b>Total assets:</b>				
Mean amount	\$57	\$76	\$77	\$170
Percent reporting zero assets	82.2 %	75.2 %	68.7 %**	64.6 %
<b>Liquid resources:</b>				
Mean amount	\$19	\$42	\$44 **	\$96
Percent holding	15.8 %	20.3 %	29.2 %**	32.1 %
<b>Shelter expenses:</b>				
Mean amount	\$238	\$69 ***	\$543 ***	\$354
Percent reporting no shelter expense	36.7 %	65.3 %***	0.6 %***	11.2 %
Mean for those reporting non-zero amount	\$377	\$198 ***	\$546 ***	\$399
<b>Characteristics of household head:</b>				
Female (%)	53.3 %	39.3 %***	76.3 %***	73.5 %
Age (mean)	33	31	35 **	36
Non-white (%)	43.8 %	46.6 %	47.3 %	44.7 %
Employed (%)	6.2 %	22.7 %*	16.6 %***	24.7 %
Disabled (%)	7.8 %	16.9 %**	12.3 %*	15.8 %
Received food stamps previously (%)	44.1 %	55.8 %	51.5 %*	47.5 %
Received expedited service previously (%)	22.4 %	21.2 %	14.4 %*	9.8 %
<b>Household composition:</b>				
One-person households (%)	58.4 %	68.9 %	29.3 %***	32.7 %
Female-headed one-person households	19.4 %	18.3 %	17.4 %	18.0 %
Households with children	35.8 %	29.1 %	62.9 %***	60.7 %
Female-headed with children (%)	22.8 %	18.9 %	42.0 %***	32.9 %
Unweighted N	4718	147	360	2885

<sup>a</sup> Destitute migrants and seasonal farmworkers not shown separately as sample size (n=9) too small to produce valid estimates.

\* Significantly different from monthly income/resources below limits category at 0.10 level.

\*\* Significantly different from monthly income/resources below limits category at 0.05 level.

\*\*\* Significantly different from monthly income/resources below limits category at 0.01 level.



\$19.<sup>4</sup> Their shelter expenses average \$238, which is almost \$100 more than their combined monthly income and liquid resources.

The *homeless* category includes only those homeless households that were not recorded as qualifying for expedited service under the income and resource criteria.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, their financial circumstances are somewhat less severe than those of the households that do fall below the income and resource thresholds. Compared to the income/resource group, the homeless:

- have roughly twice as much total monthly income (\$225 *versus* \$125);
- are much more likely to have earnings (29 percent *versus* 10 percent); and
- are more likely to have unearned income from Social Security and SSI, and less likely to receive AFDC and General Assistance.

Although the homeless group has higher incomes than the income/resource group, these applicants still fall far below the income levels of regularly-processed applicants. The homeless households' average total income, earned income, and unearned income are all less than half of the average for regularly-processed cases.

Homeless applicants and those who meet the income/resource criteria have quite similar demographic profiles. Both groups have a large proportion of one-person households (roughly 60 percent in both groups, compared to 33 percent of regularly-processed cases). Both groups include a high proportion of male applicants and have relatively few female-headed households with children.

Not surprisingly, households qualifying for expedited service because their *shelter expenses exceed their income and resources* are distinguished by exceptionally high shelter expenses—\$543 per month, on average. This far exceeds the average monthly expenditures of other expedited service households, and also exceeds those of regularly-processed applicants, who report monthly shelter expenses of \$354.

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4. As Exhibit 3.3 shows, 58 percent had zero gross income. Of the 42 percent with some income, 13 percent have reported incomes of less than \$150, and 29 percent have reported incomes of \$150 or more. These latter households should not be entitled to expedited service on the basis of their income, suggesting that they were erroneously classified in the case file records. Some, however, may qualify for expedited service on other criteria. Chapter Four discusses these issues in detail.

5. It is possible, however, that some workers recorded cases as qualifying under only the homeless criterion even though they met other criteria as well.

The demographic profile of the households whose shelter expenses exceed their income and resources is quite similar to the profile of regularly-processed cases. Most are multi-person households, three-quarters are female-headed, and over one-third are female-headed households with children. This pattern differs strikingly from the profiles of expedited service cases that qualify because of income/resources or homelessness, most of which are one-person households.

The data suggest that recent job loss may have triggered the food stamp application for a substantial number of households whose shelter expenses exceed their income and resources. Although 36 percent reported some earnings in the past month, only 17 percent of the households were employed when they applied. A quite comparable 38 percent of regularly-processed applicants reported earnings, but 25 percent of the household heads continued to be employed when they applied for benefits.

With respect to unearned income, households qualifying for expedited service because their shelter expenses exceed their income and resources look more like regularly-processed households than other expedited service households. Approximately 60 percent of the households report receiving some unearned income, and the monthly average of \$255 is virtually identical to the average for regularly-processed cases.

The resources possessed by households whose shelter expenses exceed their income/resources are quite limited. On average, they report total assets of \$77, fairly similar to the average for other expedited service households, and less than the \$170 average reported by regularly-processed households.

**Homeless Households.** As discussed above, homeless households qualifying for expedited service solely due to the McKinney Act provisions have, on average, monthly income roughly twice that of expedited service households who meet the income and resource limits. The income of these homeless households, however, is still far below that of regularly-processed applicants. The issue addressed in this section is how these "post-McKinney" homeless households compare to the "pre-McKinney" homeless—those who also qualify for expedited service on the basis of their income and resources.

Exhibit 3.4 shows the characteristics of all homeless applicants, separating those who qualified for expedited service prior to the McKinney Act from those who qualified only because of the Act's provisions. The pre-McKinney homeless are exceptionally poor, with less than half the income and resources of other households who qualified for expedited service prior to the

## Exhibit 3.4

**CHARACTERISTICS OF APPROVED HOMELESS APPLICANTS,  
BY ENTITLEMENT CRITERIA**

	Would Have Qualified for Expedited Service Prior to McKinney Act	
	Yes	No
<i>Monthly gross income:</i>		
Mean amount	\$50 ***	\$225
Percent with zero income	76.8 %**	46.0 %
Income relative to poverty line	0.07 ***	0.30 %
<i>Earnings:</i>		
Mean amount	\$12 ***	\$114
Percent receiving	5.0 %**	29.3 %
<i>Unearned income:</i>		
Mean amount	\$38 *	\$111
Percent receiving	18.9 %	27.9 %
<i>Total assets:</i>		
Mean amount	\$23 *	\$76
Percent reporting zero assets	89.4 %**	75.2 %
<i>Liquid resources:</i>		
Mean amount	\$5 *	\$42
Percent holding	8.3 %*	20.3 %
<i>Shelter expenses:</i>		
Mean amount	\$39 *	\$69
Percent reporting no shelter expense	81.5 %*	65.3 %
<i>Characteristics of household head:</i>		
Female (%)	35.2 %	39.3 %
Age (mean)	32	31
Non-white (%)	47.1 %	46.6 %
Employed (%)	2.4 %**	22.7 %
Disabled (%)	5.8 %**	16.9 %
Received food stamps previously (%)	41.8 %*	55.8 %
Received expedited service previously (%)	23.7 %	21.2 %
<i>Household composition:</i>		
One-person households (%)	81.7 %***	68.9 %
Female-headed with children (%)	12.4 %	18.9 %
Unweighted number	1503	147
Weighted percent	89.8 %	10.2 %

\* Significantly different from value for "no" group at 0.10 level.

\*\* Significantly different from value for "no" group at 0.05 level.

\*\*\* Significantly different from value for "no" group at 0.01 level.



McKinney Act, and one quarter the income and resources of other homeless households. Few are employed, and they report average monthly unearned income of \$38, approximately half of which comes from General Assistance. Their total reported assets average \$23.

Most of the homeless applicants, both pre- and post-McKinney, report no expenditures for shelter. Those that do report some expenses have fairly low expenses, on average. Some of these reported expenses are undoubtedly payment for accommodations in shelters; others may represent contributions to friends or relatives with whom they are temporarily staying.

The percentage with shelter expenses is lower for the pre-McKinney group: only 19 percent report any shelter expenditures, compared to 35 percent of the post-McKinney group. This suggests that the housing situation for the pre-McKinney group may be the more tenuous.

In other respects, the pre- and post-McKinney homeless households tend to be more similar to each other than to any of the other categories of applicants. They are predominantly one-person households, predominantly male, and rarely female-headed households with children—and all of these statements characterize the pre-McKinney group somewhat more than the post-McKinney group.

**Access to Food.** A further indicator of a household's need for immediate food stamp assistance is the degree to which the household is experiencing difficulties providing food for its members. Because standard application forms provide no information on the adequacy of access to food, a survey of food stamp applicants was conducted. As discussed in Chapter One, all households that applied for food stamps in the sample offices during August and September 1993 were asked to complete a brief self-administered survey that asked about their circumstances immediately prior to applying for benefits. Several questions pertained to the applicants' ability to provide food for themselves and their families.

Exhibit 3.5 presents the survey questions and responses for expedited and regularly-processed applicants. It also presents the responses of expedited households, depending on the criterion under which they qualified for expedited service.

Overall, expedited service households report greater difficulties in providing food than do regularly-processed households. Many regularly-processed applicants report some difficulty, but expedited service applicants are 12 to 16 percentage points more likely to report that:

# ACCESS TO FOOD OF APPROVED FOOD STAMP APPLICANTS, BY EXPEDITED SERVICE STATUS

Access to Food <sup>a</sup>	Regularly-Processed	Expedited Service			Shelter Expenses Exceed Income/ Resources <sup>b</sup>
		All	Monthly Income/ Resources Below Limits <sup>b</sup>	Homeless <sup>b</sup>	
Which statement best describes the food eaten in your household in the last month?					
Enough of the kinds of food we want to eat	19.7%	16.3%	16.6%	20.2%	12.0%
Enough food but not always the kinds of food we want to eat	34.7	27.0†††	26.7	26.7	27.9
Sometimes not enough to eat	32.9	32.4	32.1	33.9	35.1
Often not enough to eat	<u>12.8</u>	<u>24.4†††</u>	<u>24.6</u>	<u>19.2</u>	<u>25.0</u>
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
In the last month, were there days when you or your household had no food or money to buy food?					
Percent responding "yes"	43.3%	59.0†††	58.6%	53.2%	64.2%
Number of days this occurred (mean) <sup>c</sup>	8.9	10.4†††	10.6	7.2***	9.3
In the last month did you or anyone in your household skip meals because there wasn't enough food or money to buy food?					
Percent responding "yes"	35.4%	50.7†††	50.8%	48.2%	52.2%
Number of days this occurred (mean) <sup>c</sup>	8.2	9.4†	9.5	7.3	8.7
In the past week, have you eaten in ... places serving free meals or ... gotten free food? <sup>d</sup>					
Percent responding "yes"	12.2%	24.4†††	25.9%	19.8%	6.6%***
Number of days this occurred (mean) <sup>c</sup>	4.0	4.3	4.4	4.5	3.1
Unweighted N	1320	2371	2139	73	129

<sup>a</sup> Self-reports from applicant survey.<sup>b</sup> Unduplicated criteria; number of migrants too small to present separate estimates.<sup>c</sup> Mean computed for those saying "yes".<sup>d</sup> Excludes free school lunches for children.

\* Significantly different from monthly income/resources limits category at 0.10 level

\*\* Significantly different from monthly income/resources limits category at 0.05 level

\*\*\* Significantly different from monthly income/resources limits category at 0.01 level

† Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at 0.10 level.

†† Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at 0.05 level.

††† Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at 0.01 level.

- they "often did not have enough to eat" during the past month;
- they had no money to buy food on some days in the past month;
- they or someone in their household had skipped meals because there was no money to buy food; and
- they had received free food or free meals during the past week.

All of the expedited service groups, including the groups qualifying for expedited service solely because of McKinney Act provisions, report greater problems of food access than the regularly-processed cases. The group with the highest incidence of problems, however, is the homeless applicants who also meet the income and resource criteria (see Exhibit 3.6). These pre-McKinney households report a substantially higher incidence of problems than any other group on three of the four measures of food adequacy.

**Living Arrangements.** Details of the living arrangements of food stamp applicants provide additional information about their circumstances at the time they apply for benefits. This issue is particularly relevant for homeless households, because some food stamp officials have raised concerns that some households who qualify for expedited service solely under the expanded definition of homelessness in the McKinney Act are not urgently in need of emergency assistance. They cite, for example, households that report living "temporarily" with friends or relatives for extended periods of time.

The self-administered survey asked food stamp applicants several questions about their living arrangements at the time they applied for food stamps. The first question asked whether they had a permanent place to live. The second asked them to report the place or places they slept during the preceding week, and in some instances, how long they had been staying there. Multiple responses were permitted to this question, though generally only one response was given. Exhibit 3.7 presents the responses of expedited service applicants separately for the different entitlement criteria. The responses of regularly-processed applicants are presented for comparison.

A large majority of regularly-processed applicants (87 percent) report that they have a permanent place to live. Most of these have their own apartment or house, though some have a permanent residence with a friend or relative. Regularly-processed food stamp applicants who



## Exhibit 3.6

ACCESS TO FOOD OF APPROVED HOMELESS APPLICANTS,  
BY ENTITLEMENT CRITERIA

Access to Food <sup>a</sup>	Would Have Qualified for Expedited Service Prior to McKinney Act	
	Yes	No
Which statement best describes the food eaten in your household this past month?		
Enough of the kinds of food we want to eat	14.7 %	20.2 %
Enough food, but not always the kinds of food we want to eat	21.3	26.7
Sometimes not enough to eat	28.8	33.9
Often not enough to eat	<u>35.2</u> **	<u>19.2</u>
Total	100.0 %	100.0 %
In the last month, were there days when you or your household had no food or money for food?		
Percent responding "yes"	63.7 %	53.2 %
Number of days this occurred (mean) <sup>b</sup>	11.6 ***	7.2
In the last month, did you or anyone in your household skip meals because there wasn't enough food or money to buy food?		
Percent responding "yes"	60.2 %	48.2 %
Number of days this occurred (mean) <sup>b</sup>	10.5	7.3
In the past week, have you eaten in ... places serving free meals or ... gotten free food? <sup>c</sup>		
Percent responding "yes"	37.0 % ***	19.8 %
Number of days this occurred (mean) <sup>b</sup>	4.4	4.5
Unweighted number	726	73

<sup>a</sup> Self-reports from applicant survey.<sup>b</sup> Mean computed for those saying "yes."<sup>c</sup> Excludes free school lunches for children.

\* Significantly different from value for "no" group at 0.10 level.

\*\* Significantly different from value for "no" group at 0.05 level.

\*\*\* Significantly different from value for "no" group at 0.01 level.

Exhibit 3.7

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF APPROVED FOOD STAMP APPLICANTS,  
BY EXPEDITED SERVICE STATUS

Living Arrangements <sup>a</sup>	Regularly-Processed	Expedited Service			
		All	Monthly Income/Resources Below Limits <sup>b</sup>	Homeless <sup>b</sup>	Shelter Expenses Exceed Income/Resources <sup>b</sup>
Whether applicant has a permanent place to live					
Yes	86.5%	66.7%†††	64.6%	40.0%**	96.8%***
No	13.5	33.4	35.4	60.0	3.2
If not, months since had permanent place to live (mean)	21	12†	12	11	4***
Where applicant slept during past week:					
Own apartment, house, or room	76.6%	52.4%†††	49.4%	25.6%***	92.2%***
Friend or relative's place (permanent)	11.8	15.4†	16.1	20.0	5.7***
Relative's place (temporarily)	8.5	15.0†††	16.1	22.1	2.7***
Friend's place (temporarily)	3.3	8.2†††	8.9	10.8	0.3***
Shelter/welfare hotel	1.0	5.0†††	5.3	10.9	0.4***
Outdoors	0.6	8.3†††	8.9	16.1	0.0***
Other indoors (e.g., bus station, abandoned building)	0.0	2.0†††	2.3	0.0***	0.0***
Total	> 100%	> 100%	> 100%	> 100%	> 100%
Weeks lived temporarily with relatives (mean)	11	15	15	18	8***
Weeks lived temporarily with friends (mean)	7	7	7	2***	1***
Unweighted N	1320	2371	2139	73	129

<sup>a</sup> Self-reports from applicant survey

<sup>b</sup> Unduplicated criteria.

\* Significantly different from monthly income/resources limits category at 0.10 level

\*\* Significantly different from monthly income/resources limits category at 0.05 level

\*\*\* Significantly different from monthly income/resources limits category at 0.01 level

† Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at 0.10 level.

†† Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at 0.05 level.

††† Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at 0.01 level.

do not have a permanent place to live generally report that they are living temporarily with friends or relatives. Few are living in shelters or outdoors.

Expedited service applicants, in contrast, report a variety of living arrangements. Approximately two thirds report having a permanent place to live, mostly their own apartment or house, though some live with friends or relatives. Of the one-third without a permanent place to live, just under 25 percent report staying temporarily with friends or relatives. The rest live in clearly temporary situations—5 percent in shelters, 8 percent outdoors, and 2 percent at other indoor places not intended as residences (e.g., bus stations).

Living arrangements differ substantially depending upon the criterion under which a household qualifies for expedited service. Households who qualify only because their *shelter expenses exceed their income and resources* have very stable living situations—more so than regularly-processed applicants. Virtually all of these expedited service applicants (97 percent) have a permanent place to live. Ninety-two percent have their own apartment or house, and the rest live permanently with relatives or friends.

The living arrangements of those classified in the case file records as *homeless* vary somewhat, depending on whether the applicant would have qualified for expedited service prior to the McKinney Act, as Exhibit 3.8 shows.

As one would expect, most of the applicants classified as homeless reported that they have no permanent place to live. Somewhat surprisingly, however, 20 percent of the pre-McKinney homeless households and 40 percent of the post-McKinney households report that they do have a permanent place to live. Some report that they have their own apartment, house, or room; the rest say they live permanently with friends or relatives.

Although several possible explanations for this finding exist, we cannot be sure of the reasons. Some case file records may have erroneously classified households as homeless. Some survey respondents may have been confused about the distinction between permanent and temporary. The surveys were self-administered, and some respondents may not have paid close attention to the distinction. Others may have varying ideas about what constitutes a "permanent" situation.

Among those applicants without a permanent place to live, the pre-McKinney cases are more likely to be living outdoors than the post-McKinney cases (29 percent *versus* 16 percent). A substantial number of both types of homeless applicants report living temporarily with friends



## Exhibit 3.8

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF APPROVED HOMELESS APPLICANTS,  
BY ENTITLEMENT CRITERIA

Living Arrangements <sup>a</sup>	Would Have Qualified for Expedited Service Prior to McKinney Act	
	Yes	No
Whether applicant has a permanent place to live:		
Yes	21.2% *	40.0%
No	78.8	60.0
If not, months since had permanent place to live (mean)	11	11
Where applicant slept during past week:		
Own apartment, house, or room	8.5% **	25.6%
Friend or relative's place (permanent)	12.5	20.0
Relative's place (temporarily)	24.7	22.1
Friend's place (temporarily)	19.5 **	10.8
Shelter/welfare hotel	17.3	10.9
Outdoors	28.6 *	16.1
Other indoors (e.g., bus station, abandoned building)	<u>7.9 ***</u>	<u>0.0</u>
Total	>100%	>100%
Weeks lived temporarily with relatives (mean)	14	18
Weeks lived temporarily with friends (mean)	5 *	2
Unweighted N	726	73

<sup>a</sup> Self-reports from applicant survey.

\* Significantly different from value for "no" group at 0.10 level.

\*\* Significantly different from value for "no" group at 0.05 level.

\*\*\* Significantly different from value for "no" group at 0.01 level.

and relatives. The length of time they have been living with these friends and relatives is fairly similar for both groups—three to four months with relatives and one month with friends.

The homeless who also meet the income/resources criterion are more likely than the post-McKinney homeless to lack a permanent place to live and to be living in situations that clearly fit the common image of homelessness—outdoors or in places like bus stations. Many

of the homeless meeting the income/resources criterion, however, report living temporarily with friends and relatives; this type of living arrangement is not solely used by the post-McKinney homeless.

## **Summary**

The analyses presented above consider the impact on the expedited service caseload of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987. Some state and local managers of the Food Stamp Program have expressed two types of concerns about the effects of the Act. One concern is that the Act has added large numbers of applicants to the expedited service caseload. The second is that many of these applicants may have less need for expedited service than some other households who still qualify only for regular processing.

The data indicate that provisions of the McKinney Act added a substantial, though not overwhelming, number of households to the expedited service caseload. This study estimates that, nationwide, about 10 percent of expedited service cases in 1991-93 qualified for the accelerated processing solely because of the Act's provisions. Of these, 2.5 percent were classified as homeless and 7.1 percent were deemed in danger of becoming homeless because their shelter expenses exceeded their income and liquid resources.

A household's "need" for expedited service is not readily quantified. In general, however, we assume that this need is greater among households with less income and resources, more reported problems of food adequacy, and less stable living arrangements.

Using these criteria, the data indicate that the "post-McKinney" households—that is, the households that would not have qualified for expedited processing before passage of the McKinney Act—do have a higher average level of need than the households whose applications receive regular processing.

By definition, the post-McKinney households have greater incomes and/or resources than households qualifying for expedited service under pre-McKinney rules. Not surprisingly, then, the post-McKinney group falls in between the regularly-processed applicants and the pre-McKinney expedited applicants in their general financial situation. For example,

- Monthly gross income averages \$532 for regularly-processed households, \$225-\$394 for post-McKinney households,<sup>6</sup> and \$125 for pre-McKinney expedited households.
- Liquid resources average \$96 for regularly-processed households, \$42-\$44 for post-McKinney households, and \$19 for pre-McKinney households.

The adequacy of the household food supply is perhaps the best indicator of whether an applicant has an urgent need for food stamp benefits. Unfortunately, this is a difficult concept to measure, and the survey questions on this topic must be considered only rough indicators of food supply adequacy. Nonetheless, they generally support the idea that the post-McKinney households have more pressing needs than regularly-processed households. In fact, the data suggest that the post-McKinney households' food needs may be fairly comparable to those of the pre-McKinney expedited households, although the results vary somewhat from measure to measure.

The data also suggest that the two post-McKinney groups represent quite different types of households. The post-McKinney homeless, like the pre-McKinney homeless, are predominantly one-person cases and predominantly male. When they apply for food stamps, a majority are living with friends or relatives, either on a "permanent" or temporary basis, but about a quarter are sleeping in shelters or outdoors. About one fifth say that they received free food or meals in the past week.

In contrast, the households whose shelter expenses exceed their income and resources are predominantly female-headed, multi-person cases, often including children. Over 90 percent of these households live in their own apartment, house, or room, and their average monthly shelter expenses are even higher than the expenses for regularly-processed cases. They are more likely than the post-McKinney homeless to have skipped meals in the past month, but much less likely to have obtained free food or meals.

On average, then, it appears that the applicants who were granted expedited processing by the McKinney Act do have greater need for this service than the households who receive regular processing. This does not rule out the possibility—indeed, the likelihood—that some regularly-processed applicants actually have more urgent needs than some applicants who receive

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6. The range of figures represent the two post-McKinney groups: the homeless and those whose shelter expenses exceed their income and resources.



expedited service. Because there is no universally accepted measure of the urgency of peoples' needs, however, any policy that identifies particular groups for service will have this limitation.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### APPLICATION PROCESSING

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The intent of the legislation authorizing expedited service is to provide immediate assistance to households with limited resources to provide food for their families. Those entitled to expedited service receive special processing designed to allow local offices to process their applications so that clients receive their initial allotment within five calendar days of applying for food stamp benefits. Local offices also have an incentive to provide timely benefits—they are not held liable for payment errors for expedited services cases that are processed according to policy. Many food stamp officials are concerned with the administrative feasibility of processing expedited applications within five days. They argue that it is particularly difficult to meet processing requirements over weekends and holidays.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter examines several aspects of the implementation of expedited service policies. Key questions are:

- *To what extent do cases designated for expedited service receive their benefits in five days?* This basic measure of expedited service effectiveness shows that over three quarters of expedited service cases are processed within the five-day standard, an improvement over the level found by the 1987 Study using data from the early 1980s.
- *To what extent are cases accurately designated for expedited service?* Based on other information in the case file, it appears that just over 10 percent of all applicants should have qualified for expedited service but did not receive it. About 5 percent of applicants received expedited service for which they apparently did not qualify. These levels are consistent with the prior study.
- *To what extent was verification postponed in order to provide expedited service?* Verification of one or more items was postponed for 45 percent of all expedited service cases, an increase from the earlier study.

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1. In most cases, the local agency has less than five business days to process an application. For example, a household filing on Wednesday that is approved for benefits must be able to obtain its food stamps by the end of the following Monday.



This chapter presents these results in somewhat more detail, examining not only the overall outcomes but the extent to which office and case characteristics are associated with the outcomes.

### **Timeliness of Benefit Delivery**

A central indicator of the effectiveness of expedited service policy is the percentage of households that receive their initial food stamp benefits within the five days mandated by federal law. Exhibit 4.1 shows that 76 percent of expedited service cases were authorized for benefits within five days.<sup>2</sup> Within ten days, 85 percent were authorized. Most other expedited cases received their benefits within one month of application, though a small percentage were not authorized for two or more months. The average time between application and authorization was 5.7 days.<sup>3</sup>

These data indicate that local offices are doing a substantially better job of delivering expedited service benefits within the mandated time period than they were doing in the early 1980s, when data for the 1987 Study were collected. That study found that approximately 60 percent of all expedited service cases received their benefits within five days. The average processing time was seven days at that time.

A substantial number of regularly-processed applicants also receive their benefits fairly quickly, as Exhibit 4.1 shows. More than a third were authorized within five days of application, and roughly half within ten days. On average, regularly-processed cases were authorized for benefits 14.8 days after they filed their applications.

**Factors Related to Timeliness.** Substantial variation exists among offices in the percentage of expedited applications that are processed within five days. Some offices processed

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2. Information on when benefits were actually mailed out or made available over-the-counter—as distinguished from when they were authorized—is not consistently maintained in the case file records. Approximately 25 percent of all records were missing this information, making it difficult to measure timeliness definitively. Authorization appears to be a reasonably good proxy for availability, however. Examining the time between authorization and availability of benefits, for cases for which such data are available, shows that for 70 percent of expedited cases, the date of authorization and availability of benefits was the same, and for an additional 17 percent, the two dates were one day apart.

3. Comparing mean processing times for expedited service cases in the FY 1992 and 1993 samples shows a statistically significant improvement. The observed difference in the percent processed within five days is not statistically significant, however. See Appendix C, Exhibit C.4.

## Exhibit 4.1

TIMELINESS OF BENEFIT AUTHORIZATION,  
BY EXPEDITED SERVICE STATUS

Number of Days between Application and Authorization of Benefits	Status	
	Expedited Service	Regularly-Processed
Same day	37.7%	21.7%
1	16.4	4.1
2	8.0	3.5
3	6.3	2.8
4	3.8	2.8
5	3.7	2.0
Within 5 days	75.9***	36.9
6-10	9.2	15.0
11-20	6.8	20.5
21-30	6.0	18.4
31-60	1.8	7.5
61 +	0.4	1.8
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Mean	5.7***	14.8
Unweighted N	5,264	2,868

\*\*\* Significantly different from regularly-processed at the 0.01 level.

all of their expedited applications in the sample within five days, while others processed only 30 to 40 percent within this period. Exhibit 4.2 examines how office characteristics are related to the timeliness of expedited service benefit delivery.

Two characteristics of an office's *expedited service caseload* might affect the difficulty of handling these cases, and therefore the chances of processing them all within five days. The first is volume: where expedited cases make up a high proportion of the total applicant flow, offices might find it difficult to meet the deadline consistently. The second characteristic is the proportion of homeless among the expedited service caseload. Some local officials have indicated that homeless cases are more difficult than others because many cannot be located when re-contacts are necessary.

Exhibit 4.2

**TIMELINESS OF BENEFIT DELIVERY FOR EXPEDITED SERVICE CASES,  
BY OFFICE AND CASE CHARACTERISTICS**

	Processed within 5 Days	Percentage of Caseload with Characteristic
<b>Office Characteristics</b>		
Expedited service rate <sup>a</sup>		
Lower third	77.4%	19.3%
Middle third	79.1	35.8
Upper third	72.7	45.0
Percent homeless <sup>a</sup>		
Lower third	62.6%	22.7%
Middle third	82.4	37.9
Upper third	77.1	39.3
Office size		
Small	85.9%	6.5%
Medium	88.0	27.4
Large	69.9†	66.1
Office location		
Metropolitan	73.3% **	81.0%
Non-metropolitan	87.1	19.0
Caseload per eligibility worker <sup>b</sup>		
Below average	76.1%	81.6%
Above average	74.6	18.4
Structure of application process		
Same day certification interview	86.5% ***	47.8%
Screening done prior to certification interview	73.3	75.7
Structure of office		
Separate intake unit	70.6%	51.4%
Separate expedited service unit	53.9	16.6
Separate homeless unit	78.6	16.3
<b>Case Characteristics</b>		
Case received postponed verification		
Yes	81.1%	45.1%
No	71.2	54.9
Eligibility criteria (duplicated) <sup>c</sup>		
Income/resources below limits	76.1%	88.6%
Destitute migrant/seasonal farmworker	80.8	1.7
Homeless	84.1 *	23.8
Shelter expenses exceed income and resources	79.5	54.7
All expedited service cases	75.9%	100%
Unweighted N	4241	5307



**Exhibit 4.2 (cont.)**

**NOTES:**

- <sup>a</sup> The expedited service rate and homeless percent are calculated for all cases in a given office. Offices are then ordered by their rate and then grouped so that one-third of the offices are in the lowest group, one-third in the middle group and one-third in the highest group.
- <sup>b</sup> Data from the Local Office Director Survey. Ratio calculated for each office and then compared to the average across all offices.
- <sup>c</sup> Applicants may qualify under one or more criteria.
- <sup>\*</sup> Significantly different from the omitted category/other category listed at the 0.10 level.
- <sup>\*\*</sup> Significantly different from the omitted category/other category listed at the 0.05 level.
- <sup>\*\*\*</sup> Significantly different from the omitted category/other category listed at the 0.01 level.
- <sup>†</sup> Significantly different from medium at the 0.01 level and from small at 0.05 level.

The data suggest that the overall volume of expedited service cases may affect offices' success in meeting the five-day deadlines (though the observed differences are not statistically significant), but that the proportion of homeless cases is not a factor (see Exhibit 4.2). Offices with the highest proportions of expedited service cases approve 73 percent of expedited applications within five days, compared to roughly 78 percent in other offices. Offices in which a high proportion of expedited applicants are homeless, however, meet the five-day deadline about as often as the offices with fewer homeless cases.

Large offices and offices in metropolitan areas tend to have above-average proportions of expedited service cases, as shown in Chapter Two. It is therefore not surprising that these offices process relatively fewer of their expedited service cases within five days. The highest five-day processing rates are found in medium-sized offices and offices in non-metropolitan areas.

Several aspects of *office and workflow organization* might be expected to affect the office's ability to process expedited cases within five days. Two practices in particular seem to yield positive results:

- ***Same-day interview.*** Some offices conduct the certification interview for expedited cases on the day that the applicant first appears at the office. These offices authorize benefits for 87 percent of their expedited cases within five days. Beginning the certification process quickly seems advantageous for these offices.
- ***Preliminary screening.*** Offices that screen applicants to determine their eligibility for expedited service before scheduling the certification interview are also more likely than other offices to meet the five-day standard for expedited cases. These offices identify expedited cases quickly and place them on a "fast track" for processing.<sup>4</sup>

Somewhat surprisingly, the size of eligibility workers' caseloads seems not to be closely related to the proportion of expedited cases processed in five days.<sup>5</sup> Although one might expect that bigger caseloads would impede a worker's ability to process cases quickly, the fraction

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4. The bivariate relationships presented in Exhibit 4.2 do not show this relationship. Multivariate analyses, however, which control for all variables listed in Exhibit 4.2, do show that screening does have a positive impact on timelines. This difference between the bivariate and multivariate results occurs because offices with same-day interviews tend not to do preliminary screening.

5. Eligibility worker caseload is defined as the number of food stamp cases in the office divided by the number of food stamp eligibility workers.

authorized within five days is almost the same in offices with above-average and below-average caseload ratios. The analysis does not reveal, however, whether the offices with large worker caseloads have found ways to be more efficient, or whether the large caseloads detract from other dimensions of performance.

Some offices designate special units to handle intake in general or expedited or homeless applicants in particular. None of these practices appears to create any strong advantage for processing cases within five days. In fact, only offices with special homeless units had above-average processing rates. None of the observed differences were statistically significant, however.

In addition to office-level characteristics, the analysis also considered two *case-level processing characteristics*: whether verification was postponed, and the criteria under which the case qualified for expedited service.

The policy regarding postponed verification is intended to allow offices to meet the processing standard for expedited cases that could not otherwise be authorized within five days. It appears to fulfill this intention. Postponed cases are somewhat more likely to receive benefits in five days than the cases for which verification is not postponed (81 *versus* 71 percent), though the difference is not statistically significant.

Applicants are somewhat more likely to be processed within five days if they qualify for expedited service under more than one criterion. Those qualifying under one of the special criteria (destitute migrant, homeless, or high shelter expenses), in addition to the income/resources criterion, are more likely to be processed within five days than those qualifying only under the income and resource limits.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps cases qualifying for expedited service under more than one criterion are particularly likely to be noticed and thus channeled more quickly than others into the expedited process.

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6. Examining the unduplicated distribution shows that those qualifying *only* under the special criteria are less likely to be processed within five days than those qualifying under the income and resource limits. Some of the cases qualifying under the special criteria in the duplicated distribution qualify only under that one criterion, and some also qualify under the income/resource criterion. The percentage of cases processed within five days in the latter group is very high.



## Accuracy of Expedited Service Designations

Food stamp applicants' case file records contain information on whether or not they were identified as being qualified to receive expedited service. Thus far in this report we have used this designation to identify expedited service cases, as these are the cases that the office considers subject to the special procedures.

The issue considered in this section is how accurately the determination is made. Using other information from the case file record, including income, resources, and housing expenses, we independently define the expedited service status of all applicants and compare this to the status designated by the food stamp worker.

The expedited service status of 74 percent of all applicants is correctly determined, as the top panel of Exhibit 4.3 shows. Few who receive expedited processing are not actually qualified to receive it (6 percent of all applicants). Nevertheless, 20 percent of all applicants appear qualified for expedited service but were shown in the case record to be subject to regular processing procedures.<sup>7</sup>

The 1987 Study, cited earlier, produced similar results. That study found that 4.5 percent of all applicants received expedited service though they did not meet the entitlement criteria, and that 15.7 percent qualified for expedited service but received regular processing.

Applicants who qualify for expedited service but do not receive it are, potentially, subject to undue hardship. Before concluding that one fifth of applicants do not receive the service to which they are entitled, however, we need to consider how many of these applicants receive their benefits within five days and therefore, in effect, receive expedited service. Caseworkers may be less concerned about the designation a case receives if, for example, they know that the case will have its benefits within five days, regardless of designation.

The case file data show that 40 percent of the regularly-processed applicants who appear qualified for expedited service received their benefits in five days or less. If we count these cases as having received expedited service, the percentage of applicants who qualified for but did not receive expedited service drops from 20 percent to 12 percent of all applicants, as the bottom panel of Exhibit 4.3 shows.

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7. We also examined the accuracy of screening for the 1991-1992 and 1993 samples separately, and found no sizeable differences. See Appendix C, Exhibit C.5.

Exhibit 4.3

## ACCURACY OF EXPEDITED SERVICE SCREENING

	Qualified for Expedited Service		
	Yes	No	Total
<i>Received Expedited Service<sup>a</sup></i>			
Yes	32.4%	5.6%	38.0%
No	<u>20.2</u>	<u>41.8</u>	<u>62.0</u>
Total <sup>c</sup>	52.6%	47.4%	100.0%
<i>Received Expedited Service—Adjusted</i>			
Yes <sup>b</sup>	40.5%	5.6%	46.1%
No	<u>12.1</u>	<u>41.8</u>	<u>53.9</u>
Total <sup>c</sup>	52.6%	47.4%	100.0%

<sup>a</sup> As designated in case file.

<sup>b</sup> For applicants qualified for expedited service, includes cases designated as expedited *or* cases that received benefits within five days. For applicants *not* qualified for expedited service, refers only to case file designation.

<sup>c</sup> Unweighted N = 8,192.

Workers might incorrectly fail to designate applicants as expedited for several reasons. Workers might not be fully aware of the criteria for expedited service. They might be aware of the criteria and of an applicant's eligibility, but feel that particular applicants are not in urgent need of benefits and therefore neglect to designate them for expedited processing. Or the workers might simply make mistakes.

The data suggest that some systematic misunderstanding or neglect of the expedited service criteria exists. Of those regularly-processed cases that should have qualified for expedited service, 54 percent would qualify solely because their shelter expenses exceed their income and resources (see Exhibit 4.4). In contrast, such cases account for less than 10 percent of the applicants that are designated to receive expedited service. Either food stamp workers are substantially less likely to understand the criteria related to high shelter costs, or they are more likely to ignore the criteria in the belief that these cases do not urgently need assistance.

Apart from this issue, the data suggest that random human error accounts for much of the remaining misdesignation. Examining the situations of regularly-processed applicants who would meet the basic income and resource criteria for expedited service shows a pattern of need

## Exhibit 4.4

REGULARLY-PROCESSED CASES QUALIFIED TO RECEIVE EXPEDITED SERVICE<sup>a</sup>

Criteria under Which Applicant Would Qualify for Expedited Service	Percentage Distribution	
	Duplicated	Unduplicated
Monthly income/resources below limits	40.9%	40.9%
Destitute migrant/seasonal worker	1.3	0.9
Homeless	8.6	3.8
Shelter expenses exceed income/resources	<u>79.1</u>	<u>54.4</u>
Total	> 100%	100%
Unweighted N	594	594

<sup>a</sup> Includes only cases designated as regularly-processed that did not receive their benefits within five days.

## Exhibit 4.5

INCOME, RESOURCES, AND EXPENSES:  
REGULARLY-PROCESSED CASES QUALIFIED TO RECEIVE EXPEDITED SERVICE<sup>a</sup>

Characteristics	Criteria under Which Applicant Would Qualify for Expedited Service <sup>b</sup>	
	Monthly Income/ Resources Below Limits	Shelter Expenses Exceed Income/ Resources
Gross income Percent with zero income Mean	72.1% \$29	25.6% \$281
Liquid resources Percent with zero Mean	90.9% \$3	81.4% \$20
Shelter expenses Mean Shelter expenses less gross income and liquid resources (mean)	NA NA	\$526 \$225
Unweighted N	307	400

<sup>a</sup> Includes only cases designated as regularly-processed that did not receive their benefits within five days.

<sup>b</sup> Cases may qualify under more than one criterion.



that is quite like the pattern for cases that actually received expedited service (see Exhibit 4.5). Thus there is no reason to suspect that workers considered these cases less needy than the ones they designated for expedited service.

With regard to the cases that receive expedited service for which they were apparently not qualified, human error seems to be the main explanation. Hardly any cases are erroneously designated for expedited service on grounds of homelessness or migrant status, both situations that are fairly easy to ascertain (see Exhibit 4.6). The erroneous designations were based on income, resources, and shelter costs—factors that not only require verification and computation, but whose values often change between an applicant's first report and the conclusion of certification. It is possible that a number of these apparently misdesignated cases receive expedited service on the basis of information that the applicant initially provides but that is subsequently revised.

In any event, the data do not suggest that these are "marginal" cases whose circumstances narrowly missed qualifying under the expedited service criteria. The income, resource, and shelter cost averages shown in Exhibit 4.7 are closer to the figures for regularly-processed cases than to the average for expedited service cases (see Exhibit 3.3).

### **Administrative Practices**

Households applying for food stamp benefits must provide documentation verifying their circumstances. Verification is required for a range of items covering the applicant's identity, household composition, financial circumstances, and expenses, as shown in Exhibit 4.8. Regularly-processed households must supply all required documentation before receiving their initial issuance.

In order to meet the mandated timeframes for providing assistance to expedited service cases, workers are allowed to suspend the normal requirements for verifying items of eligibility, and local offices are not held liable for any payment errors that result from postponing verification. The minimum requirement is that applicants must provide proof of identity before receiving their initial benefits. Workers are required, however, to verify all the items that can

Exhibit 4.6

**CASES RECEIVING EXPEDITED SERVICE THAT DID NOT MEET  
THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

Reported Eligibility Criteria	Percentage Distribution	
	Duplicated	Unduplicated
Monthly income/resources below limits	88.7%	88.7%
Destitute migrant/seasonal worker	0.2	0.1
Homeless	1.4	0.3
Shelter expenses exceed income/resources	<u>58.2</u>	<u>10.9</u>
Total	> 100%	100%
Unweighted N	565	565

Exhibit 4.7

**INCOME, RESOURCES, AND EXPENSES:  
CASES RECEIVING EXPEDITED SERVICE THAT DID NOT MEET ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA<sup>a</sup>**

Characteristics	Reported Eligibility Criteria	
	Monthly Income/ Resources Below Limits	Shelter Expenses Exceed Income/ Resources
Gross income		
Percent with zero income	5.3%	3.7%
Mean	\$465	\$465
Liquid resources		
Percent with zero	75.7%	71.0%
Mean	\$89	\$122
Shelter expenses		
Mean	NA	\$331
Shelter expenses less gross income and liquid resources (mean)	NA	-\$257
Unweighted N	495	319

<sup>a</sup> Cases may qualify under more than one criterion.

Exhibit 4.8

**DISTRIBUTION OF EXPEDITED CASES WITH POSTPONED VERIFICATION,  
BY ELIGIBILITY ITEM POSTPONED**

	Cases with Verification Postponed for the indicated item, as a Percentage of All Expedited Cases with Postponed Verification <sup>a</sup>
Personal	
Identity	4.4
Household composition	24.7
Residence	34.1
Alien status	2.0
SSN card/number	13.1
Financial	
Earned income	20.5
Unearned income	20.2
Vehicle	8.6
Bank statement	12.8
Other resources	3.8
Expenses	
Rent/mortgage	37.3
Gas/fuel	18.6
Electric	18.3
Water/sewage	9.0
Telephone	13.7
Dependent care	1.8
Medical	6.6
Other requirements	
Job termination	20.0
Citizenship statement	1.9
Work registration	10.5

<sup>a</sup> The numerator of this percentage is the number of cases for which information on the indicated item was not supplied at the certification interview but was required after the interview in order to verify eligibility; the denominator is the total number of cases for which the initial month's benefits were issued with postponed verification and where the postponed item could be identified (n=1,602). The total sums to more than 100 percent because of multiple items postponed.

be verified within the allowed time, and only postpone any remaining items. Any items that are postponed must be verified before receiving a second issuance.<sup>8</sup>

On average, 45 percent of all expedited service cases are issued their initial benefits with postponed verification. The use of postponed verification has become more prevalent since

8. The one exception concerns verification from out-of-state sources for migrants. These items need not be verified until the third month.



the last study of expedited service, which found that during 1983-1984, 35 percent of all expedited cases received postponed verification. The greater use of postponed verification may have contributed to the improvement in the timeliness of benefit delivery over the past decade, but it does not account for all of the improvement. While an additional 10 percent of expedited cases had their verification postponed, an additional 16 percent were authorized within five days.

The items for which verification is postponed vary quite substantially: no single item is involved in more than about a third of all postponed verifications (see Exhibit 4.8). The most commonly postponed items are shelter expenses and residency, each occurring in slightly over one-third of postponed verification cases. Other frequently postponed items include household composition, earned and unearned income, job termination, and expenses for utilities.

The use of postponed verification is not closely related to the demographic characteristics of cases (Exhibit 4.9). Within all of the subgroups examined, the proportion of expedited cases receiving postponed verification lies within a few percentage points of the overall rate of 45 percent. Postponement appears somewhat more likely for households with elderly or disabled members, and households receiving social security income—presumably many of the same people. Households with children and those receiving AFDC—also many of the same people—are also somewhat more likely to have their verification postponed. Verification may be more readily postponed for these households because of a desire among caseworkers not to burden them unduly by asking them to return to the office with additional documents before issuing initial benefits. Those with earnings are also somewhat more likely to receive postponed verification. Pay stubs or other proof of earnings are not always easy for applicants to locate, and may require the eligibility worker to contact the employer.

The use of postponed verification does vary substantially by office, however. Some offices postpone verification on virtually all expedited service cases, and others postpone verification on less than 10 percent. While offices vary in their use of postponed verification, the observed differences are only loosely related to the size of the office or its location. Postponed verification is somewhat more frequent in medium-sized and non-metropolitan offices, though only the latter difference is statistically significant.

In addition to office size and location, several administrative characteristics of the local offices are associated, to a limited extent, with the use of postponed verification. The use of postponed verification tends to be higher in offices that:

## Exhibit 4.9

**POSTPONED VERIFICATION AMONG APPROVED APPLICANTS  
RECEIVING EXPEDITED SERVICE**

	Percentage of Expedited Cases with Postponed Verification
Overall	45.1 %
<i>By Case Characteristics</i>	
With elderly or disabled	49.9
One-person households	43.1
With children	48.1
Female-headed with children	47.6
Non-white	47.9
Foreign citizen	46.1
Previous FSP recipient	44.3
Households with earnings	48.7
Households with AFDC	47.4
Households with Social Security	47.2
Households with Unemployment Compensation	41.5
<i>By Office Characteristics</i>	
Office size	
Large	42.3
Medium	51.5
Small	46.9
Office location	
Metropolitan	43.0 *
Non-metropolitan	55.4
Expedited service rate	
Lower third	48.2
Middle third	43.9
Upper third	44.7
Caseload to worker ratio	
Below average	46.8
Above average	38.3
Percentage of expedited cases processed in less than 5 days	
Below average	36.2 **
Above average	52.3
State requires processing in less than 5 days	
Yes	60.1 ***
No	38.4
Unweighted N	2311

\* Significantly different from non-metropolitan at the 0.10 level.

\*\* Significantly different from "below average" category at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* Significantly different from "no" category at the 0.01 level.

- ***Have relatively lower proportions of expedited service cases.*** With comparatively few expedited service cases, these offices may not have faced a need to design general procedures for completing verifications quickly.
- ***Have lower-than-average worker caseloads.*** The offices with relatively large numbers of caseworkers, like offices without high proportions of expedited cases, may not have been forced to design procedures for completing verification quickly.
- ***Process an above-average proportion of their expedited cases within five days.*** This result is expected, since we have already seen that cases with postponed verification tend to be processed more quickly.
- ***Face a State requirement to handle expedited cases in fewer than five days,***<sup>9</sup> which reduces the time available for completing verifications without postponement.

States have the option of assigning expedited service cases with postponed verification one- or two-month *certification periods*. This provides a full review of the case when complete verification is available, and becomes the point of termination for cases that cannot be fully verified.

Expedited cases with postponed verification are indeed more likely to receive one- or two-month certification periods than expedited cases without postponed verification (36 percent versus 20 percent), as Exhibit 4.10 shows. Expedited cases *without* postponed verification are about as likely as regularly-processed cases to be assigned one- and two-month certification periods, but they are less likely to have long certification periods (six months or more). This latter difference presumably reflects an expectation that the expedited cases have less stable circumstances, on average, than regularly-processed cases.

## Summary

One important indicator of the extent to which expedited service policy is meeting the intent of federal law and regulations is the number of expedited cases processed within the mandated five days. Just over three quarters of expedited cases currently receive their benefits

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9. Some states have established policies that expedited service cases must be processed in shorter periods than the five days specified in the federal regulation. Of the 26 states and the District of Columbia included in this study, six have such a policy.



Exhibit 4.10

**LENGTH OF INITIAL CERTIFICATION PERIOD  
BY EXPEDITED SERVICE STATUS**

Length of Certification Period, in Months	Expedited Cases			Regularly Processed Cases
	Verification Postponed	Verification not Postponed	Total	
1	24.1%	9.4% **	16.0%	10.0% **
2	11.4	10.3 **	11.4	5.3 **
3	12.5	18.5	15.6	8.5
4	11.7	9.6	10.7	8.7
5	3.8	3.9	4.0	8.3
6	15.1	18.6	16.5	19.0
7-11	7.1	10.6	9.4	14.1
12	12.2	15.0	13.1	20.4
13+	2.3	4.2	3.2	5.8
Mean	4.8	5.7 †	5.2	6.8 †
Unweighted N	2269	2515	5130	2779

\*\* Percent receiving one- or two-month certification period significantly different from verification postponed: at 0.10 level for verification not postponed; at 0.05 level for regularly-processed.

† Significantly different from verification postponed: at 0.05 level for verification not postponed; at 0.01 level for regularly-processed.

within five days. The number processed in a timely manner has increased substantially since the early 1980s, when only 60 percent were processed within five days.

Some types of offices are more successful than others at processing expedited cases in a timely manner. Small- and medium-sized offices and those with average or below-average volumes of expedited service cases tend to meet the five-day standard more often.

Five days is a relatively short time within which to process applications. Those offices that start quickly, for example by conducting certification interviews the day applicants first come into the office or by screening for expedited service entitlement, have an advantage in processing applications within five days.

Eligibility workers may postpone verification for expedited service cases in order to issue benefits in a timely manner. Workers often take advantage of this provision. Currently, 45 percent of all expedited service applications are processed with postponed verification. These

cases are somewhat more likely to receive their benefits within five days than cases that do not receive postponed verification.

The use of postponed verification has increased since the mid-1980s, when only 35 percent of expedited cases were processed without full verification. It seems likely that the improvement in the timeliness of benefit delivery is due, in part, to the increased use of postponed verification.

In general, applicants are accurately screened for expedited service—82 percent are designated correctly. Twelve percent of all applicants are qualified for expedited processing but do not receive it, and the other 6 percent receive expedited service even though they do not meet any of the entitlement criteria.

Most of these misdesignations seem to result from random human error. Some evidence suggests, however, that workers are most likely to overlook cases that meet the expedited service criterion of having shelter expenses that exceed their income and resources. Additional training may be needed on this point.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE EFFECT OF EXPEDITED SERVICE ON PAYMENT ERROR

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Since expedited service policy was first implemented in 1979, officials and policymakers at all levels of government have been concerned about the effect of the provisions on program integrity, particularly the potential for error and fraud. The laws and regulations have been changed over the last 15 years, in part to respond to these concerns. In addition, FCS has conducted studies to examine the degree of fraud and error associated with expedited service. The most recent study, completed in 1987, found that expedited service did not lead to more payment errors.

The longstanding concerns about program integrity, however, were triggered again by the passage of the McKinney Act. As discussed earlier, many officials have been concerned that the McKinney Act substantially increased the expedited service caseload and that the groups added by the Act are particularly difficult to process accurately. As a result, they have been concerned that error rates have risen.

The most accurate way to estimate issuance errors associated with expedited service would be to measure the errors directly. This would involve conducting quality control reviews on expedited service cases applying the same standards used for regular cases, instead of the more lenient standards currently applied to expedited service cases. This approach would be quite costly, however, and would require extensive federal-State planning.

The approach taken in the current study has been to examine measures that serve as indicators of potential error. Specifically we examine three indicators:

- Patterns of benefit change in the early months after initial issuance (if expedited cases are more likely than regular cases to experience early terminations or decreases in their benefits, this would suggest that expedited cases may be more error-prone than other cases).
- The overpayment resulting from continuing payments to expedited service cases who never complete all required verification.
- Whether the error rates of regularly-processed cases are affected by the proportion of expedited cases processed by the local office, which would suggest that expedited service detracts from other dimensions of local office performance.



We conclude that expedited service does lead to some errors in initial payments for those cases that receive benefits with postponed verification, though in the aggregate these errors are not large when compared with other overpayment errors in the program as a whole. The evidence suggests that only rarely do cases with incomplete verification continue to receive benefits after the initial issuance. Finally, there is no indication that the error among regularly-processed cases is affected by expedited service.

### **Benefit Change After Initial Issuance**

Benefit reductions and terminations can reflect either changes in households' circumstances, correction of error in determining households' allotments, or procedural terminations (e.g., for not providing all verification). If a group of cases experiences a high rate of change in benefits in the months following application, we may infer that the group either had especially unstable circumstances, or was especially likely to have been approved for an incorrect benefit amount, or had particular difficulty complying with program requirements (or a combination of all three). The likelihood of error at the time of initial certification can be affected both by the cases's inherent error-proneness (i.e., some types of cases, such as those with earnings, are particularly likely to be in error), which is related to its characteristics, and by variations in administrative practices—such as the use of postponed verification. To the extent that we can control for the inherent error-proneness and likelihood of subsequent circumstantial changes by statistical means—based on the case's measured characteristics at the time of application and the caseworker's subjective judgment as reflected in the assigned certification period—any remaining difference in rates of benefit change may be considered a plausible indicator of differences in case error associated with administrative practices.

Using this logic, we compared the incidence of early termination or benefit reduction for three kinds of cases: expedited cases with postponed verification, expedited cases without postponed verification, and regularly-processed cases. As will be seen below, expedited cases as a whole are substantially more likely to experience such changes than regular cases. When household characteristics are taken into account, expedited cases *without* postponed verification are no more likely than regular cases to experience an early reduction or termination of benefits. Those *with* postponed verification, however, are significantly more likely to experience a termination or reduction in benefits. "McKinney cases," defined as cases that qualify for

expedited service because they are homeless or have shelter expenses that exceed their income, but whose income and resources would not qualify them, exhibit similar patterns as other expedited services cases. We infer that expedited service cases with postponed verification may be more likely to be approved in error or overpaid than regular cases with similar characteristics. This conclusion must be qualified by the consideration that the models we estimate may have omitted important determinants of inherent error-proneness and circumstantial change that may be associated with the use of postponed verification.

**Termination Rates for Expedited Service and Regular Cases.** Expedited service cases in general are much more likely than regular cases to close within three months of initial certification.<sup>1</sup> The three-month closure rate—or early termination rate—is 8.1 percent for regular cases, but 16.0 percent for expedited service cases (Exhibit 5.1, last column). For those cases for which verification has been postponed, the rate is still higher—21.4 percent. McKinney cases are somewhat more prone to early termination than expedited service cases in general (19.1 *versus* 16.0 percent).

Most cases with postponed verification did eventually complete all required verification. Of the expedited cases with postponed verification that closed by the third month, 57.8 percent never completed their verification. Thus, of all cases with postponed verification, 12.4 percent ( $= 0.214 \times 0.578$ ) closed within three months without completing their verification. In contrast, expedited service cases with postponed verification that do not terminate early nearly always complete their verification (91.7 percent).<sup>2</sup>

Part of the observed difference in termination rates may be due to a higher likelihood of changing circumstances among expedited service cases. The eligibility worker assesses the

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1. In this analysis, which uses case file data from 1991-1993, we examined patterns of benefit change among approved applicants by comparing the first-month and third-month allotment amounts. We expressed the first-month benefit amounts on a full-month basis, to remove the effect of any pro-rating based on the date of application. We used the third rather than the second month because for many expedited cases the initial issuance combines the first- and second-month benefits, which means terminations or benefit changes will not become evident until the third month. Therefore, in order to treat all cases equally, we examine changes between the first and third month's benefits.

We examined patterns of benefit change separately for the 1991-1992 and 1993 samples, and found no substantial differences (see Appendix C, Exhibit C.5).

2. See section below on continuing payments made to expedited service cases with incomplete verification for an estimate of the overpayment error associated with incomplete verification.

## Exhibit 5.1

## EARLY TERMINATION BY EXPEDITED SERVICE STATUS AND LENGTH OF CERTIFICATION PERIOD

Percent of Cases Terminated by Third Month after Approval	Certification Period One or Two Months	Certification Period Three or More Months	All Certification Periods <sup>a</sup>
Expedited service cases			
Verification postponed	36.1% **	13.6% ***	21.4% ***
Verification not postponed	34.1	7.1	12.1 *
All	35.1 **	9.4 **	16.0 ***
Expedited service cases: McKinney only			
Verification postponed	38.9 **	18.0 ***	30.0 ***
Verification not postponed	32.6	5.8	11.2
All	34.2	9.5	19.1 **
Regular cases	21.7	5.9	8.1

<sup>a</sup> These percentages differ slightly from those shown in Exhibits 5.2 and 5.3 because data on the length of the certification period was missing for some cases.

\* Significantly different from regular cases at the 0.10 level.

\*\* Significantly different from regular cases at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* Significantly different from regular cases at the 0.01 level.

likelihood of such a change in assigning the certification period. Thus, from the eligibility worker's viewpoint, the financial circumstances of an expedited service case that is assigned a longer certification period presumably are expected to be about as stable as those of a regular case that is assigned a similar certification period.

Controlling for the certification period does not eliminate the disparity in termination rates, however. Among cases that are assigned certification periods of three months or more, the early termination rate remains higher for all expedited service cases than for regular cases (9.4 *versus* 5.9 percent). The disparity is even larger for cases with postponed verification. In fact, the three-month termination rate for cases with postponed verification is more than twice the rate for regular cases (13.6 *versus* 5.9 percent). A large although not statistically significant difference is also seen for cases assigned one- or two-month certification periods (36.1 *versus* 21.7 percent). McKinney cases follow the same patterns as other expedited service cases.



Given these patterns, one cannot rule out the possibility that expedited cases with postponed verification are more likely to be certified erroneously.

**Changes in Allotment for Expedited Service and Regular Cases.** Considering all kinds of benefit changes—terminations, increases, and decreases—expedited service cases are only slightly more likely to experience a benefit change over the first three months than regular cases. As Exhibit 5.2 shows, 64.3 percent of expedited service cases and 66.8 percent of regular cases experience no change or a change of \$5 or less. The similarity of these two numbers masks two countervailing differences, however. On the one hand, as discussed previously, expedited service cases are 8 percentage points *more* likely to experience a termination. On the other hand, these cases are 5 percentage points *less* likely to experience a benefit increase (13.8 *versus* 9.2 percent). The lower probability of a benefit increase presumably reflects the fact that expedited service cases have less income than regular cases at the time of application, and often have no income at all. Cases that are already receiving the maximum allotment for their household size, or close to the maximum, are unlikely to experience a benefit increase.

Expedited service cases with postponed verification experience significantly more benefit changes of all types than the expedited cases without postponed verification. The postponed verification cases are 9 percentage points more likely to terminate, 5 percentage points more likely to have their allotment reduced, and 3 percentage points more likely to experience an increase in benefits than cases without postponed verification. All of these differences except for benefit increases are statistically significant.

Expedited cases without postponed verification resemble regularly-processed cases in their frequency of terminations and benefit reductions. Both groups are much less likely than the expedited cases with postponed verification to experience terminations or benefit reductions.

McKinney cases exhibit patterns similar to those of all expedited service cases, with two exceptions. First, McKinney cases are more likely to experience an increase in benefits than expedited cases in general. In fact, McKinney cases are similar to regular cases in this respect. This reflects the fact that McKinney cases have more income than other expedited cases, and are thus less likely to receive the maximum allotment in the initial benefit calculation. As a result, changes in their circumstances can lead to an increase in monthly benefits. Second, McKinney cases with postponed verification are particularly likely to terminate within three months. Thirty

## Exhibit 5.2

## CHANGE IN MONTHLY BENEFIT AMOUNT BETWEEN FIRST AND THIRD MONTHS OF INITIAL CERTIFICATION, BY EXPEDITED SERVICE STATUS

	Termination or Benefit Decrease			Benefit Increase	No Change	Total
	Termination	Benefit Decrease	Either			
Expedited service cases						
Verification post-poned	21.3 % ***	13.3 %	34.6 % ***	10.6 %	54.8 % **	100%
Verification not post-poned	12.0 *	8.7 *	20.7	8.1 ***	71.2	100
All	16.0 ***	10.6	26.5 **	9.2 **	64.3	100
Expedited service cases: McKinney only						
Verification post-poned	29.8 ***	15.1	44.9 ***	16.4	38.7 ***	100
Verification not post-poned	10.9	3.8 ***	14.6	13.6	71.8	100
All	19.1 **	9.6	28.7	14.5	56.8 *	100
Regular cases	8.1	11.3	19.4	13.8	66.8	100

\* Significantly different from regular cases at the 0.10 level.

\*\* Significantly different from regular cases at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* Significantly different from regular cases at the 0.01 level.

percent of McKinney cases with postponed verification terminated, compared to 21 percent of all expedited cases with postponed verification. This difference is not, however, statistically significant.

**Multivariate Models of Termination and Benefit Reduction.** As discussed above, benefit changes or terminations can reflect either changes in households' circumstances or the correction of an error in eligibility or benefit amount that occurred during the certification process. We do not have data on the circumstantial changes actually experienced by households after their initial certification, and thus we cannot eliminate observed benefit changes that reflect a real change in the household's situation. We do, however, know that some types of households are more likely to experience changes than other households. Furthermore, even if we were able to eliminate circumstantial changes, and if we still found postponed verification

cases were more likely to be in error at time of approval than regular cases, the difference might be due to a greater inherent error-proneness (i.e., some types of cases are more likely to be in error than others) rather than to postponed verification *per se*. We have therefore estimated multivariate models of the likelihood of early termination, and of early termination or benefit reduction, that control for case characteristics. Thus, we take into account compositional differences between the expedited and regular caseloads that might be associated with inherent error-proneness and with the likelihood of a change in the household's circumstances.

The models we estimated contain four types of explanatory variables—indicators of expedited service status, certification length, household characteristics, and site indicators. The actual models are presented in Appendix D, Exhibit D.4. The coefficients were used to estimate the adjusted termination and benefit reduction rates shown in Exhibit 5.3. The unadjusted rates presented earlier are reproduced here to aid in comparisons.

### Exhibit 5.3

#### EARLY TERMINATION AND BENEFIT DECREASE RATES BY EXPEDITED SERVICE STATUS: UNADJUSTED AND ADJUSTED FOR CERTIFICATION PERIOD, HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS, AND SITE

	Unadjusted		Adjusted	
	Termination	Termination or Benefit Decrease	Termination	Termination or Benefit Decrease
Expedited service cases				
Verification postponed	21.3%***	34.6%***	16.2%***	29.5***
Verification not postponed	12.0*	20.7	8.6	19.0
All	16.0***	26.5**	12.0**	23.8***
Expedited service cases: McKinney only				
Verification postponed	29.8***	44.9***	19.8***	29.8***
Verification not postponed	10.9	14.6	9.4	14.9*
All	19.1**	28.7	15.2***	23.2
Regular cases	8.1	19.4	10.3	21.1

\* Significantly different from regular cases at the 0.10 level.

\*\* Significantly different from regular cases at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* Significantly different from regular cases at the 0.01 level.



The differences in the adjusted rates of termination and benefit reduction between expedited service and regular cases are substantially smaller than the differences in the unadjusted rates. This supports the hypothesis that at least some of the observed variation in the overall rates reflects the differing characteristics or composition of expedited and regular cases. That is, the expedited cases are inherently more error-prone and/or their circumstances are more unstable than regular cases, and because of this, expedited cases are more likely to terminate or experience a decrease in benefits by the third month of program participation.

Nevertheless, even after controlling for case characteristics and characteristics of the local food stamp office, expedited service cases are still significantly more likely to experience early termination or benefit reduction than regular cases. Approximately 12 percent of expedited cases terminate after three months, compared to 10 percent of regular cases. Examining rates of termination and benefit decrease combined, 24 percent of expedited cases *versus* 21 percent of regular cases experience one of these types of change.<sup>3</sup> These observed differences are statistically significant.

The differing results for expedited and regular cases stem entirely from postponed verification. Expedited cases that did not have postponed verification had in fact slightly lower adjusted rates of termination and benefit decrease than regular cases. It is the expedited service cases with postponed verification that are especially prone to early termination and early benefit reduction. Approximately 16 percent of expedited cases with postponed verification terminated within three months, compared to 10 percent of regular cases. Thirty percent of expedited cases with postponed verification either terminated or experienced a decrease in benefits, compared to 21 percent of regular cases.

The patterns for McKinney cases are fairly similar to those observed for expedited cases in general, though the McKinney cases are somewhat more likely to experience an early termination (15.2 versus 12.0 percent). These results suggest that the additional cases qualifying for expedited service under the McKinney Act are only somewhat more error-prone than expedited cases in general.

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3. Rate of benefit decrease is obtained by subtracting termination rate from rate of termination and benefit decrease.

The evidence presented here is consistent with the hypothesis that expedited service *with postponed verification* leads to error at the time of application. The evidence does not support the hypothesis that expedited service without postponed verification leads to error. The evidence is suggestive rather than conclusive, however, because we cannot be certain that differences in inherent error-proneness and stability of case circumstances—the alternative explanations for higher-than-usual rates of early termination and benefit reduction—are adequately captured in the regression models. For example, if applicants with low coping skills—an unmeasured characteristic—are both inherently more error-prone and more likely to require postponed verification, then the models would show an association of termination rates with postponed verification, even though there was no causal relation. The possible existence of other unmeasured determinants of inherent error-proneness and circumstantial change requires us to treat our findings with some caution.

**Impact on Overpayment Error.** Given the evidence that expedited service with postponed verification leads to at least some payment error in initial issuances, it would be useful to know the magnitude of the error involved, to gauge whether this presents a relatively large or relatively small concern for expedited service policy. We can use the rates of termination and benefit decrease calculated in the previous sections, along with our estimates of the expedited service rate and the postponed verification rate, to estimate the potential national overpayment error attributable to postponed verification. We refer to this as "presumptive overpayment error," as it represents our best estimates of the dollar value of the additional error that results from the use of postponed verification. Currently, states are not held liable for any payment error to expedited service cases that are processed according to policy, nor do these payment errors count in the calculation of quality control error rates.

Our calculations show that the amount of error attributable to postponed verification is fairly small.<sup>4</sup> For expedited cases with postponed verification, the estimated national presumptive overpayment error ranges from \$14 million to \$30 million per year. These estimates may appear large when viewed in absolute terms, but relative to the amount of food stamp benefits issued, the error is fairly small, comprising only 0.1 to 0.2 percent of total issuances to all active cases. This compares to the national overpayment error rate for FY 1992

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4. See Appendix E for details of the calculations.



of 8.2 percent. The presumptive overpayment error, when expressed as a percentage of benefits issued to approved applicants in the first and second months of initial certification, ranges from 0.8 percent to 1.8 percent. This compares to an overpayment error rate for such cases of 6.9 percent.

### **Continuing Payments Made to Expedited Service Cases with Incomplete Verification**

There is a risk that some cases, through administrative oversight, may fail to complete their verification and yet continue to receive benefits for more than the one or two months allowed by regulation.<sup>5</sup> The data suggest that such errors do occur, but only quite rarely.

Among expedited service cases with postponed verification, between 18 and 25 percent of the case records contain no indication that the verification was completed.<sup>6</sup> This corresponds to around 10 percent of the expedited service caseload. Some cases may of course have completed their verification even though it is not recorded in the case file. In any event, those cases for which verification is not known to be complete tend to terminate or to have a recertification very quickly.

The great majority (71 percent) of these cases are closed or recertified before issuance of a third month of benefits. For all cases in which verification was not completed, the mean length of benefit receipt up to their time of recertification is only 2.4 months. If we assume that cases should have been authorized for 1.5 months, on average,<sup>7</sup> then the cases without complete verification received an average of 0.9 months of benefits beyond the intent of the regulation.

### **Impact of Expedited Service on Case Errors for Regularly-Processed Cases**

The final hypothesis to be tested in this chapter is that expedited service, by absorbing administrative resources, detracts from other dimensions of local office performance, in particular its error rate for regularly-processed cases.

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5. Households that apply late in the month are authorized for both a (partial) first month and a second month before their verification must be completed.

6. A range is necessary due to lack of information on completion of verification of 7 percent of these cases.

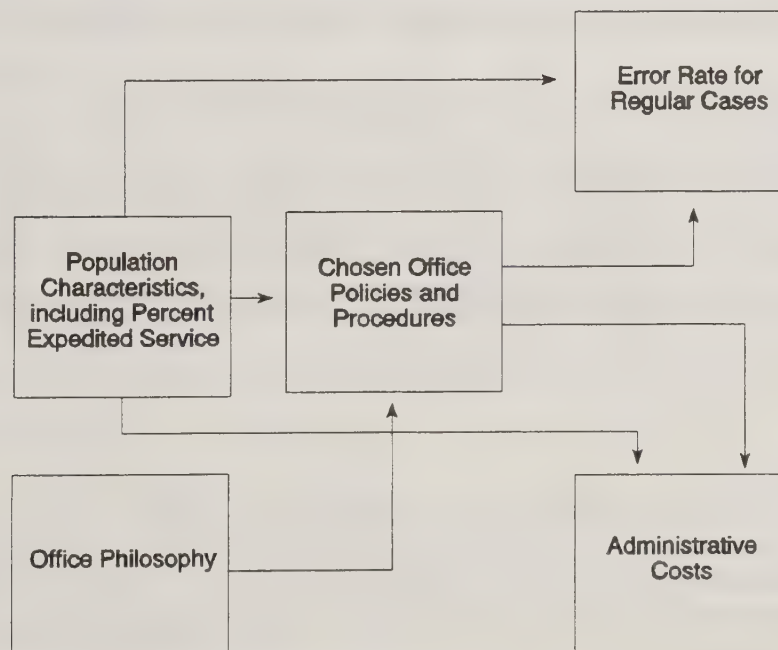
7. This assumes that half of the applicants arrive in the second half of the month and are authorized for two issuances.



It is important to note that while an added administrative burden may lead to a higher error rate, this result is not automatic. The error rate for regular cases is determined by a multitude of factors, some of which must be taken as given by the local food stamp agency (such as case characteristics), and some of which are decided by the local agency (such as certification procedures). The policies and procedures in an office are in part a reaction to its environment. For example, offices with large proportions of expedited service cases may adapt their procedures so as to handle them more efficiently. Furthermore, extra resources used may not affect the error-related handling of regular cases; administrative costs may rise instead, or cuts may be made in other areas.

These relationships are depicted in Exhibit 5.4. The error rate for regular cases is shown as being influenced by both controllable factors (office policies and procedures) and uncontrollable ones (population characteristics). These two sets of factors affect administrative costs as well. Office policies and procedures are determined jointly by the environment and the office philosophy.

**Exhibit 5.4**  
**EFFECTS OF EXPEDITED SERVICE ON ADMINISTRATIVE OUTCOMES**



To examine the impact of expedited service cases on the likelihood of payment error in other cases, an extract was taken from the 1992 Food Stamp Quality Control (QC) Database. The analysis sample consisted of active food stamp cases in the 59 study sites, with the following omissions:

- cases that were identified as having received expedited service;
- cases in States in which expedited service cases were not clearly identified in the QC data (Mississippi, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Wisconsin).<sup>8</sup>

The analysis sample contained 2,279 cases in 51 sites.<sup>9</sup>

The dependent variable is *an indicator of whether a QC-reviewed case was found to be overpaid or ineligible*. Thus, underpaid cases were grouped together with correctly-paid cases for this analysis.

The explanatory variables included:

- the estimated proportion of applications in the site that receive expedited service, based on the case file abstractions in the study sites;
- case characteristics, as they appear on the QC case record—presence of earnings, number of adults in the household, number of case members, presence of an alien in the household, an excess shelter deduction, zero income, receipt of AFDC, presence of any liquid assets, presence of any medical expenses; and
- an indicator of whether the site was in a metropolitan area.

One of the drawbacks of the QC public use file is that the data on case characteristics are based on information provided by the applicant during the application process. Thus, if the QC reviewer detects an error, the correct information is not included in the QC file. The case

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8. In New Jersey and Wisconsin, QC reviewers do not identify a case as having received expedited service if the case has no postponed verification. In Mississippi, Nebraska, New Mexico, and Wisconsin (and also in Alaska, Maine, South Carolina, and Utah, which were not included in our study), QC reviewers do not identify expedited service cases whose most recent action was an initial certification that occurred more than two months before the review month.

9. In addition to the seven sites that were dropped because they fell in one of the above-mentioned five states, one additional study site with a small food stamp caseload (Lampasas, Texas) had no cases in the 1992 QC database.

characteristics included in the model are therefore incorrect for some cases.<sup>10</sup> The model was estimated using unweighted logistic regression.<sup>11</sup>

Data were also available from the survey of local office directors on a variety of office characteristics that might be hypothesized to affect the likelihood of error (e.g., the caseload per eligibility worker). These factors were excluded from the model, however. As noted above, we believe that local agency policies are likely to be affected by such environmental factors as the expedited service rate. Thus, it is not meaningful to speak of the effect of an increase in the proportion of applications that receive expedited service, holding office procedures constant, because the procedures would *not* remain constant. Regional indicators were likewise intentionally excluded from the model, for two reasons. First, while case error rates may vary systematically across regions, the differences are at least partially due to systematic policy differences. Second, the handful of offices included from each of the seven FCS regions are not necessarily representative of the regions as a whole.

The expedited service rate in the local office had no effect on the likelihood that a regularly-processed case was found to be in error. The coefficient on the expedited service rate is close to zero, and statistically insignificant. The likelihood of error was significantly higher for cases with reported earnings, with more case members, and with excess shelter deductions. Other case characteristics, as well as location in a metropolitan area, were not found to have significant effects.

This negative result is not particularly surprising—indeed, it would have been more surprising to find a substantial effect. All of the previous analyses have suggested that expedited service generates no more than a small amount of pressure on payment error. Even if the pressure were substantially greater, it might not lead to higher error rates because, as discussed above, offices would likely modify their procedures to deal with the increased volume of expedited service cases.

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10. This could potentially affect the coefficients of the explanatory variables, including the expedited service rate, though the effect is likely to be small in this model.

11. The model is presented in Appendix D, Exhibit D.5.



## **Summary**

In this chapter, we examined several indicators of the likely error-proneness of expedited service cases. We concluded that none of the indicators suggests that expedited service leads to substantial overpayment error.

The evidence does suggest that expedited service cases issued initial benefits with postponed verification do receive somewhat more benefits than they should. Our estimates are that this may result in overpayments of between \$14 million and \$30 million a year. While in absolute terms these numbers may appear high, they represent between 0.1 and 0.2 percent of the total payments for the program as a whole in FY 1992.

Few expedited cases that do not complete their verification continue to receive benefits after the initial issuance, indicating that the local offices have established appropriate mechanisms to terminate postponed verification cases that never comply with verification requirements.

Finally, the evidence indicates that the error rate of regularly-processed cases is unaffected by the proportion of expedited service cases processed by the local office.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE EFFECT OF EXPEDITED SERVICE ON STAFF TIME REQUIRED TO PROCESS APPLICATIONS

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The use of expedited service can be hypothesized to have three effects on the amount of worker time required to certify cases, potentially increasing the time required for these tasks. First, the process of screening all cases for expedited service status consumes some office resources. Second, because eligibility workers may issue the first month's benefits to expedited cases without complete documentation, additional staff time may be required to process information that is provided after the certification interview. Finally, because cases may be given shorter certification periods by virtue of receiving expedited service, additional resources may be needed for extra recertifications.

In determining the extent to which expedited service leads to these consequences, it is important to distinguish between *observed differences* in administrative resources for expedited service and regularly processed cases, and *impacts of expedited service per se*. As noted in Chapter Two, expedited service cases differ systematically from regularly-processed cases in a variety of dimensions. Such factors may themselves contribute to the amount of time required to certify a case. For example, because expedited service cases tend to be one-person households, the certification task might be simpler. The average time required to certify these simpler cases might be less than the average time for regularly-processed cases, even if the expedited service procedures *per se* tended to increase the time required.

This chapter presents the results of analyses addressing the three hypotheses listed above. These analyses indicate that, with the exception of the need for screening, the impacts of expedited service *per se* on administrative outcomes are quite small.

#### Resources Used for Screening Cases for Expedited Service

The most obvious impact of expedited service on office administration is that *all* applicants must be screened to determine whether they should receive expedited processing. This appears to be entirely an addition to the application process; that is, the screening does not save time at any later certification steps.

Office staff involved in processing food stamp applications were surveyed to determine the amount of time required to certify expedited service *versus* regularly-processed cases. The application process was broken down into six steps:

- screening to determine expedited services entitlement;
- certification interview (including scheduling the interview);
- verification activities occurring after the certification interview;
- calculation of food stamp eligibility and benefit amount;
- issuance activities; and
- other steps.

Staff were asked to report how long it took them to carry out these steps for various types of cases: expedited services, food stamp only; expedited services, with public assistance; regularly-processed cases, food stamp only; regularly-processed cases, with public assistance; and cases with various special circumstances. A total of 417 individuals in 59 offices completed the survey, including supervisors, eligibility workers, assistant eligibility workers, and clerks.

This analysis considers just the time spent on screening applicants. Nearly all offices (94 percent) rely on eligibility workers for screening—either alone, or in combination with supervisors and clerks (Exhibit 6.1). The remaining offices use clerks alone. Supervisors are involved in the screening process in 37 percent of offices.

The time spent by supervisors, eligibility workers, and clerks has been tabulated separately, on the assumption that these three types of staff perform distinct functions. It is unclear, however, whether a particular application would be screened by all three types of workers. If this assumption is erroneous, then, for example, supervisor time should be thought



## Exhibit 6.1

## STAFF CONDUCTING EXPEDITED SERVICE SCREENING

Staff Conducting Screening	Percent
Offices use:	
Supervisors	37.3%
Eligibility workers (EWs)/assistant EWs	93.5
Clerks	61.9
Offices use:	
Only EWs/assistant EWs	21.8%
Only clerks	6.5
EWs/assistant EWs + clerks	34.4
EWs/assistant EWs + supervisors	16.3
All three	21.0
Total	100.0%

of as a substitute for, rather than a complement to, the time spent by eligibility workers and their assistants.<sup>1</sup>

Averaged across all offices (i.e., including the offices where supervisors spend no time in screening), supervisors take 8 to 10 minutes to screen a case. Eligibility workers take 9 to 13 minutes, and clerks take 12 to 14 minutes (Exhibit 6.2). If we assume that the staff involved in screening all perform different functions and participate in screening each application, then the time required for screening cases is, on average, 30-40 minutes. If, on the other hand, we assume that only one staff member is involved in screening each applicant (even in offices that report several different staff members are involved in the screening process), then screening takes, on average, 10-15 minutes. These estimates can be viewed as upper and lower bounds on the time required to screen applicants for expedited service.<sup>2</sup>

1. The surveys asked respondents whether they were involved in screening applicants and, if so, how much time screening generally required. We do not have information on whether, in offices where different types of staff are involved in the screening process, each type of staff is involved in screening every applicant, or whether some amount of substitution is involved. We do know, however, that the screening process is structured differently in various offices. Some simply have applicants check off boxes on the application form, while others conduct a screening interview with each applicant. It seems likely that in some offices, multiple staff are involved in screening, while in other offices, the staff act as substitutes for each other.

2. These estimates are based on workers' reports of the time they spend screening applications. As reported in a study Abt conducted for FCS on food stamp certification costs, self-reports generally overestimate the time actually spent, by as much as 50 percent, on average. (William Hamilton *et al.*, *Factors Affecting Food Stamp Certification Cost*, vol. 1. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc., November, 1989.)

## Exhibit 6.2

## WORKER TIME FOR EXPEDITED SERVICE SCREENING

(in minutes)

	Expedited Service		Regularly-Processed	
	Food Stamps Only	Food Stamps with Public Assistance	Food Stamps Only	Food Stamps with Public Assistance
In offices in which worker type is involved:				
Supervisor	13.4	15.7	16.4	17.2
EW/asst. EW	10.6	15.0	11.0	13.0
Clerk	15.7	18.8	16.2	18.8
In all offices:				
Supervisor	8.0	8.4	9.6	9.0
EW/asst. EW	9.5	13.4	9.3	11.7
Clerk	12.4	14.1	11.9	12.9

The more complicated cases (Public Assistance *versus* food stamp only, regularly-processed *versus* expedited service) take a minute or two longer to screen than the simpler ones. These time expenditures represent the most direct administrative cost of expedited service, and probably the largest cost.

### Impact of Expedited Service on Verification Activities Occurring After the Certification Interview

Because expedited service cases have the option of bringing in verification documents after they are initially authorized for benefits, it has been hypothesized that the expedited service process creates extra work for staff who must incorporate new information into benefit calculations for these cases. While regularly-processed cases may bring in verification documents after the certification interview as well, one might expect them to do so less frequently, because the certification interview is less likely to happen on the applicant's first visit to the office.<sup>3</sup> Thus, if applicants do not have the required documents with them at the time of their screening, the regularly-processed cases might have an additional opportunity to obtain the

3. The difference is that regularly-processed cases are not authorized for benefits before the verification is complete, while expedited service applicants may be authorized immediately after the interview. This difference by itself is not hypothesized to affect administrative costs.

documents before the certification interview. Nonetheless, in this section we present several pieces of evidence indicating that the effect of expedited service in this area is negligible. These include analysis of time spent by workers in post-certification verification activities; examination of workers' responses to a direct question on the subject; consideration of the proportion of applicants with same-day certification interviews; and review of data from a previous study on the food stamp application process.

The amount of time required of eligibility workers for verification activities after the certification interview was no higher for expedited service cases than for other applicants. Although this step took about five minutes more for Public Assistance (PA) than for food stamp only cases, expedited service cases in fact took a few minutes less on average than regular cases (Exhibit 6.3). Similar results were seen with regard to the total time required for all steps: PA cases required about 20 more minutes in total, but expedited service cases required a little less time than regularly-processed cases.

The time required for verification activities refers to the amount of time required for this step *when this step was necessary*. It is still possible that a greater proportion of expedited service cases required this step.

**Exhibit 6.3**  
**MEAN ELIGIBILITY WORKER TIME REQUIRED TO HANDLE APPLICATIONS,**  
**BY CASE TYPE**  
(in minutes)

	Expedited Service		Regularly-Processed	
	Food Stamps Only	Food Stamps with Public Assistance	Food Stamps Only	Food Stamps with Public Assistance
Verification activities that occur after the certification interview	15.3	20.3	17.1	21.2
All activities	74.6	98.1	79.7	99.8

**NOTES:** Includes eligibility workers and assistant eligibility workers only.  
Averages based on those workers who handled both expedited service and regularly-processed cases.  
Means calculated within each office, then averaged across offices.

The statistics in Exhibit 6.3 should not, of course, be interpreted as indicating that expedited service reduces the amount of time required to perform certification activities.



Instead, the workers are indicating that the typical expedited service case (with its comparatively simple characteristics) takes less time to certify than the typical regularly-processed case. This analysis cannot rule out the possibility that expedited service cases would take even less time if they were processed as regular cases, but it at least eliminates the possibility that the simpler cases take *more* time to certify than regular cases due to the extra work created by the expedited service process.

Workers were also explicitly asked their opinion as to whether, for those cases which currently receive expedited service, it would require more or less time to certify them under the regular procedures. This question seems to have generated some confusion, with regard to the distinction between calendar time (which obviously would increase under regular processing) and worker time. Among eligibility workers and assistant eligibility workers, 52 percent said it would take the same amount of time. The reasons given for this answer were typically: "You still require the same documents;" "Same process involved;" "Same time involved, but at different points in [the] process;" and so on. Another 28 percent said it would take longer to process these cases by the regular procedures; but their reasons suggested that they were either thinking of calendar time or else excluding from their baseline measure some of the work that would eventually have to be done on the expedited service cases (e.g., "All factors would have to be verified before issuance;" "It would take more time because of verifications"). Fewer than 20 percent said that time could be saved by using the regular procedures on currently expedited cases: "You could combine steps;" "All cases could be worked as ready ... [rather than] constantly shuffling to meet expedited timelines."

We now turn to the question of the impact of expedited service on the likelihood that an applicant makes a trip to the food stamp office after the certification interview to bring required documentation. For the most part, one would expect that an applicant who fails to bring documentation to an expedited service interview would also fail to bring the documentation to a regular certification interview. This might not be true, however, if the expedited service interview occurs during the applicant's first visit to the office but the regular certification interview occurs some days later, giving the applicant an opportunity to assemble the needed documents in the interim.

The data suggest that same-day expedited service interviews have little potential for adding to administrative cost. In the survey of local office directors, the great majority indicated

that the flow of the application process is the same for regular cases as for expedited service cases. This would imply that either *all* applicants are interviewed on the day they come in to apply, or (less frequently) *no* applicants are interviewed on the day they come in to apply.<sup>4</sup> Combining these responses with case-level information on postponed verification reveals that only 3 percent of expedited service applicants meet the two conditions of (a) being in an office that provides same-day interviews for expedited but not regularly-processed cases, and (b) having their verification postponed. Hence these data suggest that extra verification work might be created in a maximum of 3 percent of expedited service cases.<sup>5</sup>

Confirmatory evidence of a minimal impact was found in a study of application procedures in two States.<sup>6</sup> Record reviews of applications in five offices indicated for each case whether it was approved or denied, whether it received expedited service, and whether each of 24 potentially required verifications were provided before, during, or after the certification interview. Among the 206 approved applications, at least one verification document was brought in after the certification interview by 37.5 percent of expedited service cases, and by 35.8 percent of regularly-processed cases—a very small difference.

We conclude that no more than a trivial amount of work appears to be created by the postponement of verification for expedited service cases.

### Impact of Expedited Service on Length of Certification Period

Although expedited service cases tend to have shorter certification periods than other cases, this is not necessarily a consequence of expedited service *per se*. Those cases that complete their verification before certification are required by regulation to be assigned "normal" certification periods. These certification periods may be shorter than those for most regularly-

---

4. In 34 percent of offices, expedited cases have to come back on a later day for their certification interview. Respondents who said that the application process is the same for expedited and regularly-processed cases were not separately asked about same-day interviews for regularly-processed cases.

5. This is an upper bound estimate because some of these postponed verification cases might not have brought all the necessary documents even if they had been interviewed on a later day.

6. For a general description of the study and its results, see Susan Bartlett, Nancy R. Burstein, Gary Silverstein, and Dorothy Rosenbaum, *The Food Stamp Application Process: Office Operations and Client Experiences*, Abt Associates Inc., Cambridge, MA, April 1992. The figures cited above come from an additional analysis of the data collected in this study, and are not available in the report cited.



processed cases, however, because of the less stable circumstances of the typical expedited service case. Furthermore, cases with postponed verification may, at State option, be assigned normal certification periods as warranted by their circumstances, or else one- to two-month certification periods. Thus, shorter certification periods are allowable but by no means required for cases by virtue of their expedited service status.

In the absence of postponed verification, then, expedited service has no effect on certification period length. Therefore, we assume that eliminating expedited service would have no effect on the certification periods assigned to those expedited cases whose verification is not postponed. We can then infer the impact of postponed verification by comparing certification periods for expedited service cases with and without postponed verification.

To estimate this impact, a linear regression model was estimated of assigned certification period length using data from the case file record reviews. The sample was limited to expedited service cases, and the covariates included an indicator of postponed verification and a set of case characteristics (including food stamp household size, presence of earnings, presence of AFDC income, homelessness, and the applicant being disabled).

The model indicates that postponement of verification *per se* shortened the initial certification period by 1.2 months for the average expedited service case. The average certification period for cases with postponed verification is 4.8 months. It can therefore be inferred that if their verification had *not* been postponed, they would have had certification periods of 6.0 months on average; and this is presumably the length of their subsequent recertification periods. Thus, because of postponed verification they are typically recertified in months 5, 11, 17, and so on ("Schedule A"), while if their verification had not been postponed they would have been recertified in months 6, 12, 18, and so on ("Schedule B").<sup>7</sup> An additional recertification occurs for a case with postponed verification (Schedule A) relative to a case without postponed verification (Schedule B) for that fraction of cases that loses eligibility in one of the intermediate periods between the Schedule A and Schedule B recertification dates.

We assume that cases become ineligible at a constant rate over the certification period, and thus, among cases with postponed verification, an estimated 20 percent (1.2/6.0) would have

---

7. For ease of presentation, we rounded the recertification months. Schedule A is actually 4.8, 10.8, and 16.8.



an additional recertification over the course of their spell of food stamp receipt because of having an initial short certification period. This 20 percent of postponed verification cases corresponds to 9 percent of the expedited service caseload, or 3 percent of all food stamp applicants.<sup>8</sup> The added cost per applicant is clearly smaller than the cost added by the need for screening.

## **Summary**

In this chapter evidence has been presented on the size of three potential administrative effects of expedited service of the worker time required to process applications. The results were as follows:

- Screening cases for expedited service status adds a significant amount of worker time to the application process: between 10 and 40 minutes per case.
- Little if any extra work is created for caseworkers in the application process by allowing postponement of verification.
- While States have the option of using shorter certification periods for cases with postponed verification, not all of them use this option. Overall, use of shorter certification periods increases the average number of recertifications done on expedited cases by about 0.1.

Thus, except for the resources required for the screening process itself, the impacts of expedited service on worker time appear quite minor.

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8. These numbers are calculated as follows: Postponed verification cases comprise about 45 percent of approved expedited service cases, and about 17 percent of all approved food stamp cases (postponed verification rate times expedited service rate, or  $0.45 \times 0.38 = 0.17$ ). Thus,  $0.20 \times 0.45 = 0.09$ ; and  $0.20 \times 0.17 = 0.03$ .



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### MAJOR ISSUES IN EXPEDITED SERVICE POLICY

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Previous chapters of this report describe the patterns of case flows and local office activities associated with the provision of expedited service to food stamp applicants. That information is intended to provide a backdrop against which policy makers consider possible modifications of either the general expedited service policy or the practices through which it is implemented.

To help provide a policy perspective on the descriptive data, this chapter draws on information gathered in surveys of several groups: State-level program officials in the States where the study was carried out; office directors and workers in the 59 local offices included in the study; and representatives of client advocate groups in the local areas. The surveys asked respondents for their opinions about issues and problems associated with current expedited service policy and practices. Respondents were also asked to suggest changes that would, in their opinion, improve the current policy.

Analysis of the survey responses identified several main themes in the respondents' suggestions for policy changes.<sup>1</sup> These concern the entitlement criteria, the five-day processing standard, the postponed verification policy, the monitoring of expedited service assignments, and the potential for fraud and error.

This chapter reviews the descriptive data relevant to each of these general issues. Empirical analysis by itself cannot resolve the issues; resolution will require policy decisions about how to balance competing objectives. The purpose here is to organize the background data that can inform those judgments.

#### Entitlement Criteria

State and local food stamp managers expressed many concerns about the currently legislated criteria for providing expedited service. Their suggestions for change fell mainly into

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1. The survey responses are presented in Appendix D, Exhibits D.6-D.9.



two types: restrictions of the "special population" criteria (i.e., those involving factors beyond income and resources), and raising the income and resource thresholds.

*Most officials would like to see some changes in the expedited service entitlement criteria. Approximately 35 percent would eliminate the criterion allowing applicants whose shelter expenses exceed their income and liquid resources to receive expedited service. Between 20 and 25 percent would exclude destitute migrants and seasonal farmworkers. While only 12 percent of the local officials and 25 percent of the State officials would entirely eliminate the homeless criterion, most would narrow the definition of a homeless household in some way. In contrast, the advocate groups generally do not want the current criteria changed—only 5-20 percent support restrictions on any given criterion.*

The program officials expressed several general concerns regarding the criteria providing expedited service to these special populations. Many felt that the criteria dilute the effectiveness of expedited service because they include households whose needs are less urgent than those of some applicants who do not qualify for expedited service. They also expressed concerns that the homeless definition in particular was too broad and not well-defined, so that some households that most would not consider homeless were qualifying under the current criterion. Some officials focused on the administrative difficulty of screening applicants under multiple criteria to determine whether they qualify for expedited service.

The present study provides several kinds of information relevant to this issue. It shows the number of people affected by the various criteria, and provides at least some limited indications of their neediness and of the difficulty of administering the criteria.

Fully 90 percent of all applicants currently receiving expedited service qualify under the basic income and resource criterion, although many of these households would qualify under one of the other criteria as well. The remaining 10 percent qualify only because of their membership in one of the three special populations—migrant and seasonal farmworkers, homeless households, and households with excessive shelter expenses. Most of these (7.1 percent) are households whose shelter expenses exceed their income and resources.

The available data cannot measure definitively the extent to which households who do not meet the basic income and resource criteria are in urgent need of food assistance. Nonetheless, they suggest that households who qualify for expedited service solely under the

homelessness criterion have needs comparable to those of households who meet the income/resource criterion. There is no reason to doubt the view of program officials that some individuals qualifying as homeless are not actually in urgent need. On average, however, the homeless group clearly has greater need than regularly-processed households.

The picture is somewhat less clear for the households judged at risk of homelessness because their shelter expenses exceed their income and resources. These households have substantially higher average incomes than other expedited cases, though not as high as regularly-processed cases. Their distinguishing feature is their high shelter costs, which are well above the average even for regularly-processed cases. The high shelter costs clearly place pressure on the food budget: these applicants are more likely than other expedited or regularly-processed cases to say that they have recently skipped meals because of insufficient funds, although they are less likely to have sought out free food or meals.

One way to assess the administrative difficulty of the various expedited service criteria is to consider the extent to which expedited services are provided to the "right" cases, based on information in the case record. The analysis found that 82 percent of all applicants were handled appropriately. Of the remainder, 12 percent were qualified for expedited service but did not receive it, and 6 percent received expedited service but did not meet any of the qualifying criteria.

The data suggest that the basic income/resource criterion is more likely to be correctly applied than the special population criteria. Problems seem particularly concentrated on the criterion of shelter costs exceeding income and resources, which accounted for nearly half of the instances in which qualified applicants were not given expedited service.

*Almost three quarters of the local officials, about half of State officials, and practically all advocacy group representatives would like to see some broadening of the income and asset limits. Many want the limits tied to family size, though others would simply increase the limits so that more households are entitled to expedited service.*

Although the respondents mentioned many different possible revisions of the income and resource criteria, a typical suggestion was that both the income and the asset limits be raised to \$300 while *eliminating* the entitlement for the special populations. The data provide some

perspective on the number and types of applicants who would be affected by such a policy change, as indicated in Exhibit 7.1.

Exhibit 7.1

## EFFECT ON CURRENT EXPEDITED CASELOAD OF CHANGING ENTITLEMENT CRITERIA

Expedited Service Status Under Current Rules <sup>a</sup>	Hypothetical Expedited Service Definition: Income and Liquid Resources Each \$300 or Less; Eliminate Special Populations		
	Expedited	Regular	Total
Expedited	42.7%	10.0%	52.6%
Income/resources below limits	34.5	0.0	34.5
Migrant/seasonal farmworker	0.1	0.4	0.4
Homeless	1.0	1.1	2.1
Shelter expenses exceed income and resources	7.1	8.5	15.6
Regular	4.5	42.9	47.4
Total	47.1%	52.9%	100.0%

<sup>a</sup> As calculated from data in the case file record, not as designated by workers.

Increasing the income and resource thresholds to \$300, while also eliminating the criteria concerning special populations, would potentially affect nearly 15 percent of all food stamp applicants. About 5 percent of applicants do not meet the current income and resource criteria but would qualify at the \$300 level. Ten percent of applicants meet one of the current special population criteria but have monthly income or resources exceeding \$300; the bulk of these (9 percent) are households whose shelter expenses exceed their income and assets. The overall size of the population qualifying for expedited service would be reduced by about six percentage points.<sup>2</sup>

2. Note that this analysis is based on cases whose circumstances as recorded in the case file would qualify them for expedited service, not on those who are actually designated for such service. The net effect of the policy change would be to reduce the number of households qualifying for expedited service from 52.6 percent to 47.1 percent of the applicant population.



## Five-Day Processing Standard

*Almost three quarters of the local officials and 60 percent of the State officials want more time to process expedited service applications. They argue that the current five calendar day standard does not always give them sufficient time, especially over weekends and holidays. Most would like either five working days or seven calendar days to complete the process. Not surprisingly, the advocate groups would like to have expedited application processed in less than five days. In addition, many respondents in all groups suggested extending the processing deadline in individual cases in response to factors out of the office's control, such as applicants missing appointments.*

The view of State and local officials reflects concerns about the administrative feasibility of five-day processing, not about the value of rapid processing for selected cases. Most officials consider the expedited service policy to be successful because it does, they believe, quickly alleviate the problems of people with inadequate access to food. Indeed, a quarter of the local officials as well as many client advocates feel that five days is too long for some households to wait. Nonetheless, most program operators believe that it is unrealistic to expect that all expedited cases can be processed in five days.

The study shows that over half of all expedited service cases have their benefits authorized on the same day they apply or the following day, and that 76 percent are authorized within five days. This overall five-day completion rate represents a substantial improvement from the early 1980s, despite expansion of the entitlement criteria and dramatic increases in the food stamp caseload, raising the possibility that still more progress may occur. And in some offices, all or nearly all of the expedited cases drawn for the sample were authorized within five days—15 of the 59 study offices processed at least 95 percent of the sampled cases within five days.

The study does not, however, answer the question of why almost 25 percent of the cases take over five days to process, or whether any feasible procedure could handle them within that period. No demographic group accounts for a disproportionately large share of the slow cases. Weekends and holidays do not appear to be the major obstacle, as only 5 percent are processed in six or seven days. Although some offices have very high five-day processing rates, no single characteristic or administrative procedure is common to all of them. When offices are grouped

according to administrative procedures or other characteristics, no office group processes as many as 90 percent of the expedited cases within five days. Postponing verification is clearly not an automatic solution: 19 percent of the cases whose verification is postponed still take more than five days of processing.

The widespread concern expressed by program managers suggests that further examination of this issue would be desirable. A promising approach might be to focus on a number of offices that process a very high percentage of their cases within five days, to learn more about how five-day processing can be accomplished as well as the situations in which it cannot.

### Postponed Verification

*A number of officials and advocate groups (10 to 20 percent) and almost half of the eligibility workers would like to require that all verification be provided prior to issuing expedited service benefits. Another group would still allow verification to be postponed for some items, but would increase the number of items that must be verified before issuing any benefits. Verification of income, residence, and receipt of other benefits (particularly in offices near State borders) are the items respondents consider most needed to prevent fraud. Only some advocate groups propose eliminating the requirement to verify identity prior to initial issuance in order to process applications more quickly.*

In addition to their desire to prevent fraud, some program managers consider postponed verification to be an undesirable administrative complication. They argue that the special procedures required for postponed verification (such as tracking postponed verification cases to make sure they are terminated if the verification is not completed on schedule) add to costs and reduce the overall efficiency of office procedures.

The study indicates that 45 percent of all expedited service cases have some items of verification postponed, with income and residence among the more commonly postponed items. Thus any major curtailment of the postponed verification policy would affect a substantial fraction of expedited service cases.

The intended benefit of postponed verification is that needy households receive food stamps more quickly. The study indicates that postponing verification does indeed serve that



purpose. The cases receiving postponed verification are presumably the ones most likely not to be authorized in five days under normal procedures. With postponed verification, the five-day processing rate for these cases is actually somewhat higher than the rate for cases whose verification is not postponed. The data do not indicate, however, how much longer these households would have waited if their verification had not been postponed.

The study provides no firm measure of the extent of fraud associated with postponed verification. Analysis indicates that cases with postponed verification are somewhat more likely than other cases to terminate or have their benefits reduced within two months of approval. If these "extra" terminations represent fraud, the dollar value of the fraud would be equivalent to an increase in the national food stamp overpayment rate of one or two tenths of a percentage point. In other words, postponed verification may be allowing some fraudulent receipt of benefits, but its overall magnitude is probably quite small.

Regarding administrative cost and complexity, the data also suggest that postponed verification has only a small effect at most. It appears that nearly all cases with postponed verification would in any event require a verification step after their certification interview. The main difference is that postponed verification cases have their benefits authorized first, and then are adjusted if necessary when the verification is complete; with regular procedures, the verification is used to adjust information in the case file before benefits are authorized. Thus, although any separate procedure may add complexity, it does not appear to add significantly to administrative cost. The only significant impact of expedited service on administrative cost appears to stem from the need for determining whether cases qualify for expedited processing.

### Screening for Expedited Service

*Many client advocates urge that the determination of whether cases qualify for expedited service be monitored more closely and formally. More than half believe that many clients who currently qualify for expedited service do not receive it.*

The study indicates that, while the vast majority of cases are appropriately assigned to expedited or regular processing, 12 percent of all applicants apparently qualify for expedited service (based on information in the case record) but do not receive it. Just over half of these cases would qualify by virtue of having shelter costs that exceed their income and resources.



The proportion of cases assigned incorrectly varied substantially from office to office, suggesting that management attention might lead to an improvement in overall accuracy. Although local offices were not explicitly asked about such procedures, it appears that few if any routinely analyze the accuracy of their screening efforts. Thus the study can provide no direct information on how much such procedures might increase the effectiveness of expedited service policies.

### **Fraud, Error, and Abuse**

*Since expedited service policy was first implemented, policymakers and officials have expressed concerns about the policy's potential for increasing fraud, error and abuse in the Food Stamp Program. They argued that because households can obtain benefits with little verification of their circumstances, this would lead some to deliberately misrepresent their situation, and thus receive benefits to which they were not entitled. They also argued that it would be easier for expedited households to obtain benefits in more than one jurisdiction, as local offices would not have time to check for duplicate issuances. The potential for error increases, according to some, because local offices must process cases in a relatively short timeframe, and as a result, workers may become careless. Processing expedited cases could also potentially detract from the office's efforts to process regular cases, potentially causing more error in that portion of the caseload.*

This study provides some evidence, both qualitative and quantitative, concerning these hypotheses. The data suggest that expedited service probably introduces some error and abuse, though the potential for either appears fairly limited.

The surveys of local office directors and eligibility workers asked respondents about the incidence of three types of problems that might suggest applicants were fraudulently obtaining benefits, or at least not in urgent need of emergency assistance. The questions concerned the degree to which expedited service applicants:

- received benefits in multiple counties;
- received benefits for only one month; and
- failed to pick up their initial issuance.

Most local office directors and workers (85-95 percent) did not think any of these were problems in their offices.

Expedited applicants who receive their initial benefits without completing all required verification either supply the outstanding documentation or are quickly terminated from the program. Thus, continuing payments to expedited cases with incomplete verification occurs rarely. This indicates that local offices have developed mechanisms to terminate cases that do not comply with verification requirements.

As mentioned above, cases issued benefits with postponed verification terminate more quickly than other cases, suggesting that some error may occur at certification. The data provide no insight on whether these terminations represent deliberate fraud on the part of applicants or simply eligibility worker error. In any event, the overall magnitude of the problem is estimated to be quite small relative to the general food stamp error rate.

Some applicants do apparently attempt to take advantage of expedited provisions to get their benefits quickly. According to both local office directors and workers, a substantial number of applicants misrepresent their circumstances to appear eligible for expedited service. Presumably, most of these applicants are determined ineligible for expedited service at the certification interview. By virtue of being put on the "fast track" for processing, however, their certification interview will have taken place within a few days of filing their application, and thus they probably receive their benefits relatively quickly.

We find no evidence that expedited applicants attempt to "play the system" by applying for benefits in the last half of the month, thereby obtaining up to one and one-half months benefits in their initial issuance.

Overall, the data suggest that expedited service does introduce some additional error and fraud into the Food Stamp Program. The available evidence, however, indicates that the magnitude of the problem is relatively small, and thus does not pose a problem of substantial proportions for the program as a whole.





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# Evaluation of Expedited Service in the Food Stamp Program

## Volume II—Appendices



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# EVALUATION OF EXPEDITED SERVICE IN THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

## Volume II—Appendices

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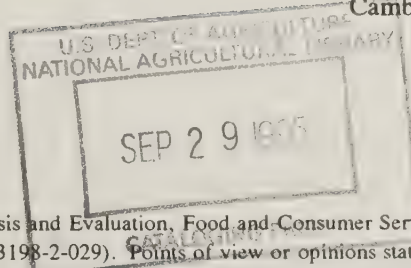
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## VOLUME II

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **SAMPLE SIZES, RESPONSE RATES, AND DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS**





## APPENDIX A

### SAMPLE SIZES, RESPONSE RATES, AND DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

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The study involved six related data collection activities:

- abstraction from client case file records of approved applicants;
- a self-administered survey of FSP applicants;
- a self-administered survey of workers involved in the application process;
- interviews with State food stamp directors or their representatives;
- interviews with local food stamp office directors; and
- interviews with representatives of client advocacy groups.

The sample sizes and response rates of these data collection activities are discussed in the first section of this appendix. Copies of all data collection instruments follow.

#### Sample Sizes and Response Rates

As discussed in Chapter One, two nationally-representative samples of approved food stamp applicants were drawn for *case file record abstraction*. The first sample includes households that applied for food stamps between October 1, 1991 and September 30, 1992, and the second sample includes those that applied during August and September 1993.

The participating States (and in some cases counties) provided the sampling frame for the 1991-1992 sample. We asked them to provide a list (machine-readable or hard copy) of all approved food stamp applicants in the relevant time period and to indicate whether the applicants received expedited service and whether they were homeless. Our sample was drawn from these lists.

The self-administered applicant survey provided the frame for the 1993 sample. During the certification interview, eligibility workers reviewed the completed survey and supplied information concerning the expedited status and homeless status of the applicant household and the disposition of the application (approved, denied, pending).

Exhibit A.1 shows the size of the initial sample drawn and the number of completed case file record abstractions.

Exhibit A.1

SAMPLE SIZES: CASE FILE RECORD ABSTRACTION

	Sample			
	October 1991- September 1992		August-September 1993	
	Number	Percentage of Sample	Number	Percentage of Sample
Number sampled	9335	100.0%	4915	100.0%
Casefile not located	1567	16.8	322	6.6
Above quota	1819	19.5	NA	NA
Ineligible	1353	14.5	813	16.5
Incomplete	99	1.1	85	1.7
Full analysis sample	4497	48.2%	3695	75.2%

The 1991-1992 sample included 9,335 cases and the final analysis sample included 4,497 cases or 48 percent of the initial sample.

Many of the States could not provide information on the expedited service status and homeless status for households applying during 1991-1992. This meant that we had to draw a much larger sample in order to ensure that we obtained the targeted number of completed record abstractions. The 20 percent of the cases listed as "above quota" reflect this effect.

The field interviewers also experienced difficulty locating 17 percent of the FY 1992 sample. These older records are often not accessible, particularly for cases that are no longer active.

Ineligible cases include primarily those that were recertifications and not initial applications, and households that were denied benefits.

The initial sample for the 1993 sample included 4,915 cases, and the final analysis file included 75 percent of these or 3,695 cases. Locating case files was less of a problem, since the abstraction took place within several months of the application. For most applicants we knew their expedited service status and homeless status, which made the sampling task more straightforward. The final disposition was known for most expedited applicants, though only



about 40 percent of regularly-processed applicants, and thus 17 percent of the initial sample, was ineligible for the study, mostly because they were denied benefits.

The self-administered *applicant survey* was completed by households applying for food stamps during August and September 1993 in the 59 offices participating in the study. All persons applying for benefits in the small and medium-sized offices, and a sample of persons in the large offices, were asked to complete the survey, which was attached to the application form.

Exhibit A.2 shows that 11,509 persons completed the survey. We were only interested in approved applicants, and thus we excluded the 11 percent who were denied benefits. Most surveys had sufficient information to be included in the sampling frame. As a result of these two factors, 86 percent of the initial sample, or 9,891 applicants, were included in the 1993 sampling frame for the case record abstraction. As mentioned above, we sampled 4,915 of these applicants.

**Exhibit A.2**

**SAMPLE SIZES: SELF-ADMINISTERED APPLICANT SURVEY**

	Number	Percent of Number Received
Number of surveys received	11,509	100.0%
Duplicates	39	0.3
Denied food stamp benefits	1,293	11.2
Insufficient information for sampling	286	2.5
Number in sampling frame	9,891	85.9
Number sampled	4,915	42.7%

The response rates on the remaining components of the data collection activities were extremely high, as Exhibit A.3 shows. All the *State food stamp directors* and *local office directors* in the participating offices completed the interviews. A sample of *food stamp workers* involved in the application process were asked to participate in a self-administered survey, and 98 percent completed it. Finally, all representatives of *local advocacy groups* contacted for the study agreed to be interviewed.

**Exhibit A.3**

**SAMPLE SIZES: STATE OFFICIAL, LOCAL OFFICIAL,  
FOOD STAMP WORKER, AND ADVOCACY GROUP INTERVIEWS**

	Number Selected	Number Completed Interviews/Surveys
State officials	26	26
Local food stamp directors	59	59
Food stamp workers	424	417
Advocacy groups	58	58

**Data Collection Instruments**

Copies of the six data collection instruments can be found as follows:

- Case file record abstraction form—pages A-5 to A-14;
- Applicant survey—pages A-15 to A-18;
- Worker survey—pages A-19 to A-29;
- State food stamp director interview—pages A-31 to A-54;
- Local food stamp office directors interview—pages A-55 to A-92; and
- Advocacy group interview—pages A-93 to A-103.

# CASE FILE RECORD REVIEW FORM

Abt ID	Site ID
Food Stamp Case Number (A1)	Date of Record Abstraction

## SECTION A: SCREENING INFORMATION

A1a. Is the Case number the same as the applicant's Social Security Number?

Yes ..... **SKIP TO A2** ..... 1  
 No ..... 2

A1b. Social Security Number:

|\_|\_|\_|\_| - |\_|\_|\_|\_|\_| - |\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|

A2. Month Sampled

|\_|\_|\_| MONTH |\_|\_|\_| YEAR

ALAST; AFIRST; AMIDDLE.

Head of Household's Name:

Last: \_\_\_\_\_ First: \_\_\_\_\_ Middle Initial: \_\_\_\_\_

Aj. Is the case under the jurisdiction of this office?

Yes ..... 1  
 No ..... **(REJECT CASE)** ..... 2

A3. Is there an initial certification in the case file for the sampled month?

Yes ..... 1  
 No ..... 2  
 Don't Know ..... 8

A4. Is there an initial certification in the case file for any of the following months?

October 1, 1991 - September 30, 1992 ..... 1  
 August 1, 1993 - September 30, 1993 ..... 2  
 No ..... **(REJECT CASE)** ..... 3  
 Don't know ..... **(REJECT CASE)** ..... 8

A5. Initial certification

Approved ..... 1  
 Denied ..... **(REJECT CASE)** ..... 2  
 Don't know ..... **(REJECT CASE)** ..... 8



## SECTION B: HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

B1.	Sex		
		Male .....	1
		Female .....	2
		Don't Know .....	8
B2.	Race		
		African-American, not Hispanic .....	1
		American Indian or Alaskan Native .....	2
		Asian or Pacific Islander .....	3
		Hispanic .....	4
		White, not Hispanic .....	5
		Other (Specify _____)[B2A] ...	6
		Don't Know .....	8
B3.	Citizenship		
		United States .....	1
		Other .....	2
		Don't know .....	8
B4.	Marital Status		
		Never married .....	1
		Married .....	2
		Separated .....	3
		Divorced .....	4
		Widowed .....	5
		Don't know .....	8
B5.	Disabled		
		Yes .....	1
		No .....	2
		Don't know .....	8
B6.	Employment Status		
		Employed .....	1
		Not employed .....	2
		Don't know .....	8
B7.	Received food stamps before current application		
		Yes .....	1
		No .....	<b>SKIP TO Q.C1</b> 2
		Don't know .....	<b>SKIP TO Q.C1</b> 8
B7a.	End date of most recent spell		
		_ _ _   _ _ _   _ _ _	
		MONTH DAY YEAR	
B7b.	Received expedited service before this application		
		Yes .....	1
		No .....	2
		Don't know .....	8

# SECTION C: HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

C1. NUMBER IN FOOD STAMP HOUSEHOLD: <input type="text"/>			
C2. Members of Food Stamp Household		DATE OF BIRTH	
		MONTH	DAY
C2A	HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD		
C3B			
C2C			
C2D			
C2E			
C2F			
C2G			
C2H			
C2I			
C2J			

C2AY. If C2A Blank, Why?

Not Available ..... 1  
 Not Known ..... 2

C3. Type of household

Single parent with children ..... 1  
 Married couple/parents with children ..... 2  
 Married couple without children ..... 3  
 Single person, no children ..... 4  
 Multiple adults, with children ..... 5  
 Multiple adults, without children ..... 6  
 Other (Specify \_\_\_\_\_)[C3A] .. 7

C4. Anyone in household disabled

Yes ..... 1  
 No ..... 2  
 Don't know ..... 3

C5. Anyone in household is a destitute migrant or seasonal farmworker

Yes ..... 1  
 No ..... 2  
 Don't know ..... 3

C6. Homeless household

Yes ..... 1  
 No ..... 2  
 Don't know ..... 3

**SECTION D: INCOME, ASSETS AND EXPENSES - MONTH OF APPLICATION**

<b>D1 MONTHLY INCOME</b>	
Earnings	D1A
AFDC	D1B
General Assistance	D1C
Social Security	D1D
SSI	D1E
Unemployment Compensation	D1F
Other, SPECIFY D1G1 _____	D1G
Other, SPECIFY D1H1 _____	D1H
<b>TOTAL MONTHLY GROSS INCOME</b>	<b>D1I [AUTO-ADD]</b>
<b>D2 ASSETS</b>	
Cash	D2A
Bank accounts (checking and savings)	D2B
Other liquid resources	D2C
Vehicle (comtable portion)	D2D
Other non-liquid resources	D2E
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>D2F [AUTO-ADD]</b>



D3			SHELTER EXPENSES		
Rent/Mortgage		D3A			
Are any or all utility expense amounts for this case standard allowances?		D3STAL	Y	N	DK
Is there one standard allowance that includes all utility components?		D3STAL1	Y	N	DK
TOTAL UTILITIES: STANDARD ALLOWANCE (SKIP TO SECTION E)		D3STAL2			
		AMOUNT	STANDARD ALLOWANCE		
Telephone		D3B	D3B1 Y N DK		
Gas/Fuel		D3C	D3C1 Y N DK		
Electric		D3D	D3D1 Y N DK		
Water/Sewer		D3E	D3E1 Y N DK		
Other (Garbage and Trash, Installation Fee, etc.)		D3F	D3F1 Y N DK		
TOTAL UTILITIES	Actual D3G	[AUTO-ADD]			
	Standard allowance D3H	[AUTO-ADD]			
TOTAL MONTHLY EXPENSES	D3I	[AUTO-ADD]			

## SECTION E: APPLICATION PROCESS

E1. Application date

|\_|\_|\_| || |\_|\_| || |\_|\_|\_|\_|  
MONTH DAY YEAR

E2. Expedited service status before certification interview

Expedited service ..... 1  
Regular ..... 2  
Not determined before certification interview ..... 3  
Don't know ..... 8

**SKIP TO E4**

E3. Expedited service screening date

|\_|\_|\_| || |\_|\_| || |\_|\_|\_|\_|  
MONTH DAY YEAR

E4. Certification interview date

|\_|\_|\_| || |\_|\_| || |\_|\_|\_|\_|  
MONTH DAY YEAR

E5. Expedited service status after certification interview

Expedited service ..... 1  
Regular ..... **SKIP TO Q.E19** ..... 2  
Don't know ..... 8

E6. Expedited service criteria

E6A.	Monthly income/assets below guidelines	Y	N	DK
E6B.	Destitute migrant/seasonal farmworker	Y	N	DK
E6C.	Shelter expenses exceed income/resources	Y	N	DK
E6D.	Homeless	Y	N	DK

**IF "HOMELESS" IS CIRCLED, ANSWER Q.E7 AND Q.E8, OTHERWISE SKIP TO Q.E9**

E7. Where does applicant usually sleep

E7A. Shelter/welfare hotel ..... 1  
E7B. Halfway houses ..... 2  
E7C. Another individual's residence ..... 3  
E7D. Other indoors ..... 4  
E7E. Outdoors ..... 5  
E7F. Don't know ..... 8

E8. Note any information concerning homeless situation. If living in another individual's residence, describe the applicant's relationship to the individual and the length of time the applicant household has stayed there.

E8A.

Verification Items		Supplied at interview <sup>1</sup>			Required After Interview <sup>2</sup>			Date Supplied	Don't know
		Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know	MON/DAY/YR	
<b>PERSONAL</b>	E9 A. Identity	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
	B. Household Composition	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
	C. Residence	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
	D. Alien Status	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
	E. SSN card/number	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
<b>FINANCIAL</b>	E10 A. Income (earned)	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
	B. Income (unearned)	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
	C. Vehicle	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
	D. Bank statement	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
	E. Other resources/assets	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
<b>EXPENSES</b>	E11 A. Rent/Mortgage	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
	B. Gas/Fuel	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
	C. Electric	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
	D. Water/sewage	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
	E. Telephone	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
	F. Dependent care	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
	G. Medical	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
<b>OTHER REQUIREMENTS</b>	E12 A. Job termination	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
	B. Citizenship Statement	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
	C. Work Registration	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
<b>OTHER</b>	E13 A. Specify	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8
	B. Specify	1. 1	2	8	2. 1	2	8	3.	8

<sup>1</sup> If more than one piece of documentation need to verify an item, record yes only if all supplied.

<sup>2</sup> If more than one piece of documentation needed to verify an item, record date last documentation supplied.



E14. Were initial month's benefits issued with postponed verification

Yes ..... 1  
 No ..... 2  
 Don't know ..... 8

E15. Was any out-of-state verification required?

Yes ..... 1  
 No ..... 2  
 Don't know ..... 8

E16. Verification complete

Yes ..... 1  
 No ..... 2  
 Don't know ..... 8

E16A

→ | | || | | || | |  
 MONTH DAY YEAR

E17. Case received 2nd month's benefits

Yes (includes cases that received combined first and second month's payments) ..... 1  
 No, verification not complete ..... 2  
 No, had one month certification period and did not reapply ..... 3  
 No, verification complete and determined ineligible;  
 should not have received first month's benefits ..... 4  
 No, verification complete and determined ineligible in 2nd month  
 due to change in circumstances since first month ..... 5

E18. Duplicate payment check complete

Yes ..... 1  
 No ..... 2  
 Don't know ..... 8  
 Not Applicable ..... 9

E18A

→ | | || | | || | |  
 MONTH DAY YEAR

E19. Address **CIRCLE CODE FOR "YES", "NO", "DON'T KNOW"**

ADDRESS	Yes	No	Don't Know
A. Local office address given	1	2	8
B. Coupons or ATP picked up at office	1	2	8
C. Mailing address, not where client stays	1	2	8
D. No address given at all	1	2	8

E20. Date approved/authorized

| | | || | | || | |  
 MONTH DAY YEAR

E21. Initial certification period

From | | | | | | | |  
MONTH DAY YEAR

To | | | | | | | |  
MONTH DAY YEAR

E22. Monthly allotment amount

\$| | | | |

E23. Date initial month's benefits were:

Mailed Out:

Yes ..... 1  
No ..... 2  
Don't know ..... 8  
Not applicable ..... 9

SKIP TO E24  
SKIP TO E24  
SKIP TO E24

E23A. | | | | | | | |  
MONTH DAY YEAR

E24. Available over the counter

Yes ..... 1  
No ..... 2  
Don't know ..... 8  
Not applicable ..... 9

SKIP TO E25  
SKIP TO E25  
SKIP TO E25

E24A. | | | | | | | |  
MONTH DAY YEAR

E25. Initial month's ATP picked up

Yes ..... 1  
No ..... 2  
Not applicable ..... 3  
Don't know ..... 8  
Not applicable ..... 9

SKIP TO E27  
SKIP TO E27  
SKIP TO E27  
SKIP TO E27

E26. Initial month's coupons picked up/ATP exchanged for coupons

Yes ..... 1  
No ..... 2  
Don't know ..... 8

E26A. Date coupons received

| | | | | | | |  
MONTH DAY YEAR

E27. Amount of initial month's benefits

\$| | | | |

E28. Combined first and second month's payment

Yes ..... 1  
No ..... 2  
Don't know ..... 8

# Section F: Food Stamp Participation History

Complete for as many months as data available

\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_| DATE SAMPLED (THIS IS THE SAME AS "A2")  
 MONTH YEAR

Months after month sampled	Month and Year (MM/YY)	Status*	Reason for closure**	Monthly reporting household	Benefit amount
1st	F1A [AUTO-ADD]	F1B	F1C	F1D Y N	F1E
2nd	F2A [AUTO-ADD]	F2B	F2C	F2D Y N	F2E
3rd	F3A [AUTO-ADD]	F3B	F3C	F3D Y N	F3E
4th	F4A [AUTO-ADD]	F4B	F4C	F4D Y N	F4E
5th	F5A [AUTO-ADD]	F5B	F5C	F5D Y N	F5E
6th	F6A [AUTO-ADD]	F6B	F6C	F6D Y N	F6E
7th	F7A [AUTO-ADD]	F7B	F7C	F7D Y N	F7E
8th	F8A [AUTO-ADD]	F8B	F8C	F8D Y N	F8E
9th	F9A [AUTO-ADD]	F9B	F9C	F9D Y N	F9E
10th	F10A [AUTO-ADD]	F10B	F10C	F10DY N	F10E
11th	F11A [AUTO-ADD]	F11B	F11C	F11DY N	F11E
12th	F12A [AUTO-ADD]	F12B	F12C	F12DY N	F12E
13th	F13A [AUTO-ADD]	F13B	F13C	F13DY N	F13E
14th	F14A [AUTO-ADD]	F14B	F14C	F14DY N	F14E
15th	F15A [AUTO-ADD]	F15B	F15C	F15DY N	F15E
16th	F16A [AUTO-ADD]	F16B	F16C	F16DY N	F16E
17th	F17A [AUTO-ADD]	F17B	F17C	F17DY N	F17E
18th	F18A [AUTO-ADD]	F18B	F18C	F18DY N	F18E
19th	F19A [AUTO-ADD]	F19B	F19C	F19DY N	F19E
20th	F20A [AUTO-ADD]	F20B	F20C	F20DY N	F20E
21st	F21A [AUTO-ADD]	F21B	F21C	F21DY N	F21E
22nd	F22A [AUTO-ADD]	F22B	F22C	F22DY N	F22E
23rd	F23A [AUTO-ADD]	F23B	F23C	F23DY N	F23E

Status*	Reasons for closure**
A = active, month of initial certification; did not receive expedited service	A - over income
B = active, month of initial certification; received expedited service	B - over resources
C = active, month of recertification	C - voluntary termination
D = active, no certifications this month	D - household moved
E = closed (did not receive benefit this month)	E - did not apply for recertification
	F - did not complete verification
	G - did not complete program requirement (other than verification)



# Food Stamp Applicant Survey

The purpose of this survey is to collect information that will help the Food and Nutrition Service to learn more about the experiences of people who apply for food stamp benefits.

***Your participation in this study will not affect your ability to receive food stamps or the amount of the benefits.*** All information you provide is voluntary and strictly confidential.

Please read each question carefully and follow the instructions for how to mark your answers. Thank you for your cooperation.

**1. Is this the *first* time you have *ever* applied for food stamps? (Circle only one answer)**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No (Answer **a** and **b** below)

**IF NO: a. When was the *last* time you received food stamps? (Circle only one answer)**

- 1 Within the past 12 months
- 2 More than 12 months ago

**b. Where did you make your *last* application for food stamps? (Circle only one answer)**

- 1 At *this* office
- 2 At a different office in this state
- 3 In a different state

**2. Why did you apply for food stamps *at this time*? (Circle **ALL** the reasons listed below that apply to you or to someone in your household)**

- 1 Lost my job or cannot find a job
- 2 Work hours cut back on my job
- 3 Don't earn enough money on my job
- 4 Loss of income or benefits, such as AFDC, child support payments, or unemployment benefits
- 5 Used up my savings
- 6 Serious health problem
- 7 Lost my housing
- 8 Rent, mortgage or utilities payments went up
- 9 My spouse or partner left
- 10 A child was added to my household
- 11 I moved here from another state or county
- 12 I just found out about the Food Stamp Program

**3. Which one of the answers you circled in Question 2 is the *most important* reason that you decided to apply for food stamps today?**

Write the number for the most important answer here:

4. Did you work for pay *in the past 12 months*? (Circle only one answer)

- 1 Yes      How many months did you work for pay? (Write in number)
- 2 No      **PLEASE SKIP TO QUESTION 10**

*If you had more than one job during the past 12 months, think about the job that you held the longest.*

5. How long did you work at this job? (Circle only one answer)

- 0 Less than 1 year
- 1 Between 1 and 2 years
- 2 Between 2 and 3 years
- 3 Between 3 and 5 years
- 4 5 years or more

6. In general, how many hours a week did you work at this job? (Circle only one answer)

- 1 30 or more hours per week
- 2 Between 20 and 29 hours per week
- 3 Less than 20 hours per week

7. What was the *highest* salary that you were paid at this job?  
(Enter amount and circle the appropriate time period)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ per Hour / Week / Month / Year <--- (Circle one)

8. Were you able to get health insurance through your employer at this job? (Circle only one answer)

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

9. Please briefly describe your job title *and* the kind of business or industry in which you worked.  
(For example, "I was a typist for a company that makes running shoes.")

---

---

---

10. As of today, do you have a house, apartment, or some other *permanent* place to live?  
(Circle only one answer)

1 Yes

2 No      How long ago was it that you had a home or other permanent place to live?  
(Write in number of months or years)                  Months OR               Years

11. Over the *past 7 days*, where did you sleep or rest at night? (Circle ALL that apply)

1 My own apartment, house, or room

2 Friend or relative's place where I stay *permanently*

3 Relative's place where I'm staying *temporarily*

How long have you lived with this relative? (Write in number of days, weeks, or months)

              Days OR               Weeks OR               Months

4 Friend's place where I'm staying *temporarily*

How long have you lived with this friend? (Write in number of days, weeks, months)

              Days OR               Weeks OR               Months

5 Shelter or welfare hotel

6 *Outdoors*, on the street, in a park, in a tent, under a bridge, in a car

7 Abandoned building, bus station, subway, all-night movie, hallway, lobby, other *indoor space*

12. Over the *past 7 days*, have you or others in your household eaten any meals in a shelter, soup kitchen, or other place serving free meals, or have you gotten free food from a food bank or from someone else? Do *not* count free school lunches for children. (Circle only one answer)

1 Yes      On how many of the past 7 days did you do this?           DAYS

2 No

13. Which of these statements *best* describes the food eaten in your household *in the last month*?  
(Circle only one answer)

1 Enough of the kinds of food we want to eat

2 Enough food but not always the kinds of food we want to eat

3 Sometimes not enough to eat

4 Often not enough to eat

14. In the *last month*, were there days when you or your household had *no food or money to buy food*?  
(Circle only one answer)

1 Yes      How many days did this happen *during the past month*?                  DAYS

2 No

15. In the *last month*, did you or anyone in your household skip any meals because there wasn't enough food or money to buy food? (Circle only one answer)

1 Yes      How many days did this happen *during the past month*?                  DAYS

2 No

*Thank you for your help with this survey!*



### For Office Use Only

OFFICE USE ONLY CONTROL NUMBER						

NAME OF APPLICANT:	Last, First, MI:
SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER:	_ _ _ - _ _ - _ _
DATE OF BIRTH:	MONTH  _ _  DAY  _ _  YEAR  _ _
OTHER IDENTIFYING NUMBER, IF APPLICABLE:	_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

1. At screening, was this applicant identified as being entitled to expedited service?

- 1 Yes  
2 No

2. After the certification interview, this food stamp application was processed under:

- 1 Expedited service **ANSWER QUESTION 3 AND QUESTION 4 BELOW**  
2 Regular service **ANSWER QUESTION 4 BELOW**

3. Under which criteria was this applicant entitled to expedited service? (Circle ALL that apply)

- 1 All members of household are homeless
- 2 Shelter expenses exceed income and liquid resources
- 3 Monthly income and assets below guidelines
- 4 Migrant or seasonal farmworker

4. After the certification interview, the food stamp application was:

- 1 Approved  
2 Denied  
3 Disposition not yet determined

## SURVEY OF WORKERS INVOLVED IN PROCESSING FOOD STAMP APPLICATIONS

Dear Eligibility Specialist:

**THANK YOU** for volunteering to complete this survey of expedited service that Abt Associates is conducting for the Food and Nutrition Service. The general purpose of the evaluation is to provide national data on the size and characteristics of the expedited service population and to evaluate how well current laws and regulations target households in urgent need of assistance.

We want to assure you that Abt Associates Inc. adheres to the highest standards in protecting the privacy of individuals involved in this study. Your responses are confidential. None of the questions will be used to identify you or your clients. You may refuse to answer any question; however, we encourage you to answer all questions since your responses will represent the experience of other eligibility specialists like yourself.

You may complete this survey during your working hours.

Thank you very much. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

---

### Directions for completing this questionnaire

Please indicate your answers to questions by:

- a) *circling* the code number that appears after your answers, or
- b) *printing* your answers in the boxes or on the lines provided.

Here are some examples:

1. What is your current position at this agency?

Supervisor .....	1
Eligibility worker .....	2
Assistant eligibility worker .....	3
Clerk .....	4
Receptionist .....	5
Other position (SPECIFY)_____	6

2. If you could make one change in Federal expedited service policy or procedures, what would it be? Please explain why you would make this change.

*Allow five working days to process expedited service applications.*

---

# Survey of Workers Involved in Processing Food Stamp Applications

1. What is your current position at this agency?

- Supervisor ..... 1
- Eligibility worker ..... 2
- Assistant eligibility worker ..... 3
- Clerk ..... 4
- Receptionist ..... 5
- Other position (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_ .. 6

2. How long have you held this position?

- Less than one year ..... 1
- 1 - 5 years ..... 2
- More than 5 to Less than 10 years ..... 3
- More than 10 years ..... 4

3. How long have you worked at this agency?

- Less than one year ..... 1
- 1 - 5 years ..... 2
- More than 5 to Less than 10 years ..... 3
- More than 10 years ..... 4

4. Are you involved with assistance programs other than food stamps?

- Yes ..... 1
- No ..... 2

*PLEASE SKIP TO Q.5*

A. IF "YES": What other programs? *CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.*

- a. AFDC/ADC ..... 01
- b. Medicaid, other medical support programs ..... 02
- c. Local or county welfare ..... 03
- d. General relief/Home Relief/General Assistance ..... 04
- e. Nursing home assistance ..... 05
- f. Other homeless benefits ..... 06
- g. Refugee assistance programs ..... 07
- h. Other programs (SPECIFY BELOW) ..... 08

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## Case Processing Times

5. For each of the following steps in the application process in which you are involved, please estimate the number of minutes it takes, on average, for you to handle a case.

Steps in the Application Process in which you are involved	Check (✓) the steps in which you participate	TYPES OF FOOD STAMP APPLICANTS			
		Expedited Service, food stamps only	Expedited Service, also applying for Public Assistance	Regular 30-day, food stamps only	Regular 30-day, also applying for Public Assistance
a. Screening to determine expedited services entitlement		minutes	minutes	minutes	minutes
b. Certification interview (including scheduling the interview)		minutes	minutes	minutes	minutes
c. Verification activities that occur <u>after</u> the certification interview		minutes	minutes	minutes	minutes
d. Calculating food stamp eligibility and benefit amount		minutes	minutes	minutes	minutes
e. Activities you do to issue the initial food stamp benefit (i.e., filling in forms, coding, etc.)		minutes	minutes	minutes	minutes
f. Other steps (Specify) _____		minutes	minutes	minutes	minutes
<b>TOTALS FOR STEPS YOU PERFORM</b>		minutes	minutes	minutes	minutes

6. In the grid below, please compare the average number of minutes to process each type of expedited service case to the two "total" columns under "expedited service" in Question 5.

Compared to the average time for all steps that you perform in handling expedited service cases, does it take more time, the same amount of time, or less time to process each type of case listed below.

If you answer "more time" or "less time," please write the number of minutes it takes to process this type of case.

Type of Expedited Service Household	Expedited Service, food stamps only		Expedited Service, also applying for Public Assistance	
a. Homeless	More time	1 → ____  Minutes	More time	1 → ____  Minutes
	Same amount of time	2	Same amount of time	2
	Less time	3 → ____  Minutes	Less time	3 → ____  Minutes
	Not Applicable	4	Not Applicable	4
b. Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers	More time	1 → ____  Minutes	More time	1 → ____  Minutes
	Same amount of time	2	Same amount of time	2
	Less time	3 → ____  Minutes	Less time	3 → ____  Minutes
	Not Applicable	4	Not Applicable	4
c. Shelter Expenses Exceed Income and Liquid Resources	More time	1 → ____  Minutes	More time	1 → ____  Minutes
	Same amount of time	2	Same amount of time	2
	Less time	3 → ____  Minutes	Less time	3 → ____  Minutes
	Not Applicable	4	Not Applicable	4
d. Income and Asset Levels Below Threshold	More time	1 → ____  Minutes	More time	1 → ____  Minutes
	Same amount of time	2	Same amount of time	2
	Less time	3 → ____  Minutes	Less time	3 → ____  Minutes
	Not Applicable	4	Not Applicable	4

7. If you were required to handle expedite service cases in the same way that you handle regular 30-day cases, would it take you more time, the same amount of time, or less time? *PLEASE CIRCLE ONE ANSWER AND EXPLAIN BELOW.*

More time ..... 1  
 Same amount of time ..... 2  
 Less time ..... 3

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8. Are you involved in recertifying clients for food stamps?

Yes ..... 1  
 No ..... 2 *PLEASE SKIP TO Q.9*

- A. Which tasks do you handle? *CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY*

a. Certification interview ..... 1  
 b. Verification ..... 2  
 c. Determining expedited service status and benefit amount . 3

- B. How long does the average recertification take for: *IF YOU DO NOT WORK WITH A PARTICULAR TYPE OF CASE, WRITE "NA" IN THE "MINUTES" BOX.*

a. A Non-Public Assistance food stamp case? ..... |\_\_\_\_\_| Minutes  
 b. A Public Assistance food stamp case? ..... |\_\_\_\_\_| Minutes

### Verification and Certification Issues

9. Are you involved in certification and verification activities for food stamp clients?

Yes ..... 1  
 No ..... 2 *PLEASE SKIP TO Q.17*

10. What kinds of expedited service cases tend to have verification postponed? *CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY*

a. Homeless ..... 01  
 b. Migrant or seasonal farmworkers ..... 02  
 c. Shelter expenses greater than income and liquid resources 03  
 d. Income and assets below threshold ..... 04  
 e. Large households ..... 05  
 f. Those with income during the month of application .... 06  
 g. Those with assets at application ..... 07  
 h. Other types of cases (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_ ... 08

11. What items of verification are more likely to be postponed? *CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY*

- a. Personal identification ..... 01
- b. Social Security number or Card ..... 02
- c. Proof of address ..... 03
- d. Alien status ..... 04
- e. Earned income ..... 05
- f. Unearned income ..... 06
- g. Vehicle ownership ..... 07
- h. Bank statement ..... 08
- i. Other resources and assets ..... 09
- j. Rent or mortgage receipt ..... 10
- k. Utility bills ..... 11
- l. Medical bills ..... 12
- m. Dependent care/child care expenses ..... 13
- n. Notice of job termination ..... 14
- o. Proof of work registration ..... 15
- p. Other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_ 16

12. What is the average length of the certification period for:

- a. An expedited service case *with* postponed verification? . . . |\_\_\_\_| MONTHS
- b. An expedited service case *without* postponed verification? |\_\_\_\_| MONTHS
- c. A regular 30-day food stamp case? ..... |\_\_\_\_| MONTHS

13. Is there a point *prior* to the certification interview at which applicants' expedited service entitlement is determined?

- Yes ..... 1
- No ..... 2 *PLEASE SKIP TO Q.17*

14. In your experience, what percent of those initially screened as expedited service turn out *not* to be entitled to expedited service?

|\_\_\_\_\_| PERCENT

15. In your experience, of cases screened as being entitled to expedited service, how many are found to be entirely ineligible for food stamps at the certification interview?

|\_\_\_\_\_| PERCENT

16. In your experience, what percent of expedited service clients are found to be entitled to expedited service only at the time of the certification interview?

|\_\_\_\_\_| PERCENT



## Issues in Processing Expedited Service Clients

17. Please read the following list of problem areas in processing expedited service clients.

Rank the three most serious problems that you deal with in carrying out your duties with Problem 1 being the most serious problem.

LETTER

- (1) Most serious problem .....  
(2) Second most serious problem .....  
(3) Third most serious problem .....

a.	Meeting 5 calendar day processing standard
b.	Arranging schedule to handle the necessary expedited service interviews each day
c.	Expedited service applicants failing to appear for certification interview
d.	Approved expedited service applicants failing to pick up first month's benefits
e.	Difficulty determining whether applicants meet expedited service criteria
f.	Applicants intentionally misrepresenting circumstances to appear entitled to expedited service
g.	Applicants not in urgent need of emergency assistance receiving expedited service processing
h.	Applicants in urgent need of food assistance not receiving expedited service processing under current rules
i.	Difficulty moving between rules for processing regular and expedited service cases
j.	Postponed verification making verification process more complicated
k.	Joint processing of expedited service cases also applying for AFDC
l.	Applicants to be screened or interviewed waiting too long in the office
m.	Prorated benefits not being sufficient to meet food needs
n.	Many applicants being entitled to expedited service receiving benefits for only one month suggesting that they are not in need of emergency assistance
o.	Households receiving benefits in more than one county or service area within the same month
p.	Applicants qualifying for expedited service failing to bring verification due to complicated application forms
q.	Other problem (SPECIFY) _____

18. *In your opinion*, what percent of applicants who receive expedited service processing are in urgent need of benefits within 5 days? *IF YOU DO NOT HANDLE A PARTICULAR GROUP, PLEASE WRITE "NA" ON THE PERCENT LINE.*

Criteria for Expedited Service	For each criterion: Percent in urgent need	If your answer is not 100%, please explain your answer.
Homeless, in shelter	_____ %	_____
Homeless, temporarily in friend's or relative's house	_____ %	_____
Homeless, outdoors or indoors in a space not designed for sleeping	_____ %	_____
Migrant/seasonal farm worker	_____ %	_____
Shelter expenses exceed income and liquid resources	_____ %	_____
Income/assets below guidelines	_____ %	_____

19. *In your opinion*, about what percent of applicant households know about the expedited service provisions of the Food Stamp Program?

| \_\_\_\_\_ | PERCENT

#### Policy and Procedural Changes

20. In your opinion, is there a need for expedited service in the Food Stamp Program?

Yes ..... 1  
No ..... 2

Please explain your answer.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

21. Within Federal regulations, what changes would improve expedited service processing in your office? PLEASE CIRCLE THE CODES FOR "YES" OR "NO" FOR EACH ITEM. FOR EACH "YES" PLEASE EXPLAIN YOUR ANSWER ON THE LINES PROVIDED.

a. Additional staff

Yes ..... 1  
No ..... 2

If "YES": What type of staff are needed?

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b. Additional staff training

Yes ..... 1  
No ..... 2

If "YES": What kind of training would be most useful?

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c. Additional assistance or information on expedited service provided to clients to help them complete their part of the process (for example, provide a hotline or help with verification)

Yes ..... 1  
No ..... 2

If "YES": What assistance or information would be helpful to clients?

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d. An automated system for tracking applications

Yes ..... 1  
No ..... 2  
Already have one ..... 8

e. Other changes (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

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22. If you could make one change in Federal expedited service policy or procedures, what would it be? Please explain why you would make this change.

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23. People have suggested many kinds of changes to the Federal rules for expedited service. What do you think about each one of these suggested changes? PLEASE CIRCLE THE CODES FOR "YES" OR "NO" FOR EACH ITEM. WHERE INDICATED BY THE SHADED BOXES, PLEASE WRITE YOUR ANSWER.

	YES	NO	
A. Modify the 5 calendar day standard by:			
a. Extending it to 7 calendar days	1	2	
b. Changing it to 5 working days	1	2	
c. Returning to a 3 working-day rule	1	2	
d. Having more Federal guidelines for extending the deadline on a case-by-case basis... for example, if a client misses an interview	1	2	If "YES": For what types of situations would you like to see extensions permitted?
e. Would you like to see any other change to the current standard?	1	2	IF "YES", SPECIFY:
B. Eliminate any of the following expedited service entitlement criteria <u>entirely</u> :			
a. Homeless	1	2	
b. Migrant and seasonal farmworker	1	2	
c. Shelter expenses exceed income and liquid resources	1	2	
d. Gross income (<\$150) and asset (≤\$100) levels	1	2	
C. Broaden the expedited service entitlement criteria to include another household category	1	2	IF "YES": What category?

	YES	NO	
D. Make the following changes in the program definition of "homeless":			
a. Do not define as "homeless" persons in shelters or institutions that provide meals.	1	2	
b. Restrict the definition of "temporary" for persons living temporarily in the residence of another individual.	1	2	If "YES": What type of time limit would you suggest?      MONTHS
c. For persons living temporarily in the residence of another individual, limit eligibility to persons living temporarily with a <u>nonfamily</u> member.	1	2	
d. Would you <u>expand</u> the definition of "homeless" in any way?	1	2	IF "YES": In what way?
e. Would you change anything (else) about the program definition of "homeless"?	1	2	IF "YES": SPECIFY
E. Change the \$150 gross income limit for expedited service to some other amount	1	2	IF "YES": To what amount?
F. Change the \$100 asset limit for expedited service to some other amount	1	2	IF "YES": To what amount?
G. Tie income and assets limits to family size	1	2	
H. Eliminate postponed verification entirely. That is, require that all verification be completed prior to issuing the first month's benefits	1	2	
I. Do not eliminate postponed verification entirely, but require that items in addition to identification be verified prior to issuing the first month's benefits	1	2	IF "YES": What additional items should be verified?
J. Eliminate the requirement to verify identity	1	2	

**SPECIFY**





## State Agency Interview Guide

### Section 1: Expedited Service Population

#### Size and Characteristics of the Expedited Service Caseload

- 1.1 What percent of the households applying for food stamps currently receive expedited service?

\_\_\_\_\_ %

- 1.2 Has the number of food stamp applications in the state changed over the past two years?

YES, INCREASE . . . . . 1

YES, DECREASE . . . . . 2

NO (GO TO 1.3) . . . . . 3

- How has it changed? By what percent? \_\_\_\_\_ %

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- 1.3 Over the past two years, has the percent of applicant households receiving expedited service changed?

YES, INCREASE . . . . . 1

YES, DECREASE . . . . . 2

NO (GO TO 1.4) . . . . . 3

- How has it changed? By what percent? \_\_\_\_\_ %

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1.4 Does the number of food stamp applications vary during the course of the year? For instance, does it vary seasonally?

YES . . . . . 1

NO (GO TO 1.5) . . . . . 2

- When and by how much does it vary? (In what months or seasons? By what percent?)
- Why do these variations occur?
- Are there seasonal variations because of migrant worker circumstances?

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1.5 Does the percent of food stamp applicant households receiving expedited service vary during the course of the year? For instance, does it vary seasonally?

YES . . . . . 1

NO (GO TO 1.6) . . . . . 2

- When and by how much does it vary? (In what months or seasons?)
- Are there seasonal patterns related to the homeless? to other groups?
- Why do these variations occur?

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1.6 Does the percent of applicant households receiving expedited service in (SAMPLED OFFICES) differ from the statewide average?

YES ..... 1  
NO ..... 2

- Describe differences by site

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1.7 How would you describe the characteristics of the expedited service population in this state? For instance, . . .

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
a) Do expedited service households tend to be <u>younger</u> than the average food stamp applicant household? . . . . .	1	2
b) Do expedited service households tend to be <u>older</u> than the average applicant household? . . . . .	1	2
c) Do more individuals than families with children receive expedited service? . . . . .	1	2
d) Do households receiving expedited service tend more often to be female-headed households? . . . . .	1	2
e) Do expedited service households tend to be unemployed rather than employed? . . . . .	1	2
f) Are there more expedited service households applying simultaneously for public assistance than there are applying for food stamps only? . . . . .	1	2
g) Are expedited service households in this state predominantly homeless? . . . . .	1	2
h) Are there any other ways in which you would characterize the expedited service population in this state? . . . . .	1	2

IF "YES": Please describe.

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a) Is there a "typical" type of expedited service case?

YES . . . . . 1

NO . . . . . 2

- IF "YES": What are the characteristics of the "typical" expedited service case?

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1.8 Is the information you have provided based to some degree on data from automated information systems or internal studies, or is it based entirely on staff observations and experience?

DATA FROM SYSTEMS/STUDIES . . . . 1

STAFF OBSERVATIONS/  
EXPERIENCE (GO TO 1.9) . . . . . 2

a) What data have you used in providing these answers? What year(s) do(es) these data cover? PROBE FOR DATA SOURCES AND YEARS REPORTED.

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b) In your opinion, how accurate or reliable are these data? (Please explain your answer.)

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## Factors Affecting the Expedited Service Caseload

1.9 How would you characterize the economic climate in your State?

- Is your State's economy healthier or less healthy than that of the rest of the country? Explain.
- What are the major types of industries or employers in the State?

In these next questions, let's focus on events that have occurred within the past two years.

1.10 a) Within the past two years, how has the economic climate changed? In general, has the economic climate . . .

improved, . . . . . 1  
stayed the same, or . . . . . 2  
has it deteriorated? . . . . . 3

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	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
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b) Within the past two years . . .

(1)	Have there been any major plant closings? . . . . .	1	2
(2)	Have any major employers laid off large numbers of workers? . . . . .	1	2
(3)	Have any new businesses opened or relocated here? . . . . .	1	2
(4)	Have any major employers expanded the size of their work force? . . . . .	1	2

c) Given what you've just told me, has there been an overall increase or decrease in the number of jobs, or has there been no change in the past two years?

INCREASE . . . . . 1  
DECREASE . . . . . 2  
NO CHANGE . . . . . 3

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1.11 a) Within the past two years, has there been an increase or decrease in the size of the homeless population?

INCREASE . . . . . 1

DECREASE . . . . . 2

NO CHANGE . . . . . 3

b) Has there been an influx of new low-income residents?

YES . . . . . 1

NO . . . . . 2

c) Has there been an increase in the number of migrant or seasonal farmworkers?

YES . . . . . 1

NO . . . . . 2

d) Within the past two years, have there been (other) changes in size of or type of people who make up the area's low-income population?

YES . . . . . 1

NO . . . . . 2

IF "YES": Please describe.

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e) Has there been a change in the type of people applying for food stamps over the past two years? For example, have you seen an increase in the number of middle-class households applying for food stamps?

YES . . . . . 1

NO (GO TO 1.12) . . . . . 2

IF "YES": Describe.

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1.12 In the past two years, have there been any changes in the coverage and benefit levels of any of the following public assistance programs?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
a) AFDC/ADC? . . . . .	1	2

IF "YES": Describe change.

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b) General Assistance/General Relief/Home Relief? . .	1	2
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IF "YES": Describe change.

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c) County or local welfare programs? . . . . .	1	2
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IF "YES": Describe change.

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d) Other assistance programs? . . . . .	1	2
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IF "YES": Specify and describe change.

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1.13 Have these changes had an impact on the number of households eligible for expedited service in your State?

- Describe.

1.14 Have (SAMPLED OFFICES) been affected, by any of the changes you've mentioned, any more or less severely than have other areas of the State? If so, describe.

- Changes in economic climate
- Changes in population size or characteristics
- Changes in benefit levels for public assistance programs



## Section 2: Expedited Service Procedures and Policies

- 2.1 Federal regulations provide minimum guidelines on identifying potential expedited service applicants and procedures for verifying food stamp eligibility. I'd like to discuss how you implement Federal rules for processing expedited service applicants through State guidelines and procedures and how these guidelines and procedures might differ for regularly-processed applicants.

Let's start with outreach and informational activities.

What, if anything, do you require local offices to do to inform applicants about the availability of expedited service processing?

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- 2.2 What guidelines has the State established for identifying expedited service cases? Are there guidelines with respect to:

- how screening should be done?
  - For example, is there a separate pre-screening interview or separate screening form?

YES . . . . .	1
NO . . . . .	2
- items specified for screening?

YES . . . . .	1
NO . . . . .	2
- timing of screening?

YES . . . . .	1
NO . . . . .	2

- who does screening?

YES . . . . . 1  
NO . . . . . 2

- For example, what type/level of employee performs screening?
- Must these individuals have specific qualifications?

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2.3 Are there State policies concerning how soon after an application is filed the certification interview occurs?

YES . . . . . 1  
NO (GO TO 2.4) . . . . . 2

- Is this rule different for regularly-processed applicants?

YES . . . . . 1  
NO . . . . . 2

2.4 Now let's talk about verification. First, concerning verification activities for expedited services cases . . .

- a) Has the State established policies or procedures that routinely allow workers to verify items in addition to identity (within the five-day processing period)?

YES . . . . . 1  
NO . . . . . 2

IF "YES": Please explain.

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- b) Does the State provide guidelines specifying how workers should assist applicants in providing postponed verification?

YES . . . . . 1

NO . . . . . 2

IF "YES": Please explain.

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- c) Are there State guidelines specifying how quickly workers should attempt to complete verification?

YES . . . . . 1

NO . . . . . 2

IF "YES": Please explain.

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- d) What usually happens if verification is not complete 30 days after application?

Now, concerning verification for regularly processed cases . . .

- e) What happens if verification is not complete within 30 days after application?

- f) Are there differences in the amount of assistance in obtaining verification that local offices provide to expedited service cases versus regularly-processed cases?

YES . . . . . 1

NO . . . . . 2

IF "YES": Please explain.

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- 2.5 a) What cross-checking of automated data bases is performed on all cases applying for food stamps? (CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)
- Review status of other program participation . . . . . 1
  - Receipt of food stamp benefits in another jurisdiction . . . . . 2
  - IEVS (Income Eligibility Verification System) . . . . . 3
  - Employment records . . . . . 4
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_ 5
- b) Which of these checks are attempted prior to issuing expedited service benefits? (CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)
- Review status of other program participation . . . . . 1
  - Receipt of food stamp benefits in another jurisdiction . . . . . 2
  - IEVS (Income Eligibility Verification System) . . . . . 3
  - Employment records . . . . . 4
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_ 5
- 2.6 Is the process of determining eligibility and benefit amount partially or fully automated?
- YES . . . . . 1
- NO . . . . . 2
- Are there differences between the way expedited service and regular 30-day applicants are handled?
- YES . . . . . 1
- NO . . . . . 2
- 2.7 What are the State guidelines regarding the length of the certification period...
- for regular issuance?
  - for expedited service cases without postponed verification?
  - for expedited service cases with postponed verification?

IF RANGES ARE GIVEN: What factors determine the length of the certification period?

2.8 These next questions pertain to expedited service cases that receive postponed verification.

- a) What steps are taken to help clients complete verification?
- b) If cases are assigned one- or two-month certification periods, what are your policies for helping recipients to become recertified?
- c) When is the second application completed and filed?
- d) If assigned normal certification periods, what is the mechanism for stopping the second month's issuance if verification is not complete?

2.9 What guidelines does the State provide regarding how expedited service benefits are issued in the first month? (For example, mail ATP coupons by the third day or issue over-the-counter?)

- What systems are used in the State for issuing food stamps to expedited service cases in the first month? (CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)
  - ATP (mailed to client or to issuance point) . . . . . 1
  - Coupons mailed to client . . . . . 2
  - Over the counter (coupons issued directly to client at office or at an issuance point) . . . . . 3
  - EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) . . . . . 4
  - Other (Describe) . . . . . 6

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2.10 What systems are used in this State to issue food stamps . . .

- during the first month, to regular 30-day clients?
  - ATP (mailed to client or to issuance point) . . . . . 1
  - Coupons mailed to client . . . . . 2
  - Over the counter (coupons issued directly to client at office  
or at an issuance point) . . . . . 3
  - EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) . . . . . 4
  - Other (Describe) . . . . . 6

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- for issuance in subsequent months?
  - ATP (mailed to client or to issuance point) . . . . . 1
  - Coupons mailed to client . . . . . 2
  - Over the counter (coupons issued directly to client at office  
or at an issuance point) . . . . . 3
  - EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) . . . . . 4
  - Other (Describe) . . . . . 6

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2.11 Does the State have a staggered issuance schedule?

- YES . . . . . 1
- NO . . . . . 2

- Please describe this schedule.



2.12 I'd like to discuss areas in which State policies might go beyond Federal requirements for expedited service.

- a) Does State policy require a shorter time frame for processing expedited service cases than Federal guidelines?

YES . . . . . 1

NO . . . . . 2

IF "YES": Describe.

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- b) Can any cases be designated for expedited service other than the four categories specified in Federal regulations?

YES . . . . . 1

NO . . . . . 2

IF "YES": Describe.

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- c) Are there any other ways in which State and Federal policy differ?

YES . . . . . 1

NO . . . . . 2

IF "YES": Describe.

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2.13 Does the State have a way to measure the percent of expedited service cases that actually receive benefits within five calendar days?

YES . . . . . 1

NO . . . . . 2

- IF "YES": What mechanism is used to do this?

- Is this done on a regular basis, as part of a standard monitoring process?

YES . . . . . 1

NO . . . . . 2

- What percent of expedited service clients receive benefits within five calendar days? \_\_\_\_\_ %

- IF "NO": What is your best estimate of the percent of expedited service cases that receive benefits within five calendar days? \_\_\_\_\_ %

### Section 3: Issues in Expedited Service and Suggestions for Change

- 3.1 To what degree do the expedited service provisions of the Food Stamp Program succeed in meeting the emergency food needs of low-income families?

Please answer on a scale from "1" to "5" where "1" means "not at all successful" and "5" means "very successful."

Not at all  
successful

Very  
successful

1

2

3

4

5

- 3.2 What do you see as the major strength of expedited service? Please explain.

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- 3.3 What do you see as the major problem with expedited service? Please explain.

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3.4 Has the State made any changes in policies and procedures that have affected the way local offices process expedited service cases, that have improved operations or service delivery to clients?

(a) For example, has the State implemented procedures that increase the accuracy of screening?

YES . . . . . 1

NO (GO TO b) . . . . . 2

IF "YES": Please describe any change and its effect.

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(b) Has the State implemented procedures that resulted in more timely delivery of food stamp benefits?

YES . . . . . 1

NO (GO TO c) . . . . . 2

IF "YES": Please describe any change and its effect.

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(c) Has the State implemented procedures aimed at reducing error or potential fraud?

YES . . . . . 1

NO (GO TO d) . . . . . 2

IF "YES": Please describe any change and its effect.

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(d) Have there been any other changes that have resulted in improvements?

YES . . . . . 1

NO (GO TO 3.5) . . . . . 2

IF "YES": Please describe any change and its effect.

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3.5 Are there any other aspects of application processing procedures that make expedited service work well? Please describe.

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3.6 Within current Federal regulations, what changes in policies, procedures for implementing expedited service, and allocating of resources to local offices would you like to implement in order to improve expedited service processing? Would you like to see . . .

- a) additional staff? YES . . . . . 1  
NO (GO TO b) . . . . . 2

(1) What type of staff are needed?

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- b) additional staff training? YES . . . . . 1  
NO (GO TO c) . . . . . 2

(1) What kind of training would be useful?

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- c) additional assistance or information on expedited service to clients to help them complete their part of the process (for example, provide a hotline or assistance with verification)?

- YES . . . . . 1  
NO (GO TO d) . . . . . 2

(1) What assistance or information would be helpful to clients?

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d) an automated system for tracking applications?

YES . . . . .	1
NO (GO TO e) . . . . .	2
ALREADY HAVE THIS . . . . .	3

e) What other things could you do?

Other (specify). \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other (specify). \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3.7 If you could make one change in Federal expedited service policy or procedures, what would it be? Please explain why you would make this change.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



- 3.8 The State officials who responded to the December 1991 FNS survey on expedited service suggested many kinds of changes to the Federal rules for expedited service. I'm going to read you a list of suggested changes. Please tell me whether or not you would like to see the change made. CIRCLE "YES" OR "NO" FOR EACH ITEM.

Yes No

(a) Modify the 5 calendar-day standard by:

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| (1) Extending it to 7 calendar days . . . . .   | 1 | 2 |
| (2) Change it to 5 working days . . . . .   | 1 | 2 |
| (3) Return to a 3 working-day rule . . . . .  | 1 | 2 |
| (4) Have more Federal guidelines for extending the<br>deadline on a case-by-case basis. . . for example,<br>if a client misses an interview . . . . . | 1 | 2 |

IF "YES": For what types of situations would you  
like to see extensions permitted?

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- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| (5) Would you like to see any other change to the<br>current standard? IF "YES", SPECIFY: . . . . . | 1 | 2 |
|---|---|---|

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(b) Eliminate any of the following expedited service entitlement  
criteria entirely:

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| (1) Homeless . . . . .  | 1 | 2 |
| (2) Migrant and seasonal farmworker . . . . .                 | 1 | 2 |
| (3) Shelter expenses exceed income and liquid resources . . . | 1 | 2 |
| (4) Gross income (<\$150) and asset (<\$100) levels . . . . . | 1 | 2 |

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
(c) Broaden the expedited service entitlement criteria to include another household category . . . . .	1	2

IF "YES": What category?

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(d) Make the following changes in the program definition of "homeless":

(1) Do not define as "homeless" persons in shelters or institutions that provide meals . . . . .	1	2
(2) Restrict the definition of "temporary" for persons living temporarily in the residence of another individual. . . . .	1	2

IF "YES": What type of time limit would you suggest?

\_\_\_\_\_ Months

(3) For persons living temporarily in the residence of another individual, limit eligibility to persons living temporarily with a <u>nonfamily</u> member . . . . .	1	2
(4) Would you <u>expand</u> the definition of "homeless" in any way? . . . . .	1	2

IF "YES", In what way?

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(5) Would you change anything (else) about the program definition of "homeless"? . . . . .	1	2
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IF "YES", SPECIFY:

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(e) Change the \$150 gross income limit for expedited service to some other amount . . . . .	1	2
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IF "YES": To what amount? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
(f) Change the \$100 asset limit for expedited service to some other amount . . . . .	1	2
IF "YES": To what amount? \$ _____		
(g) Tie income and asset limits to family size . . . . .	1	2
(h) Eliminate postponed verification entirely. . . that is, require that all verification be completed prior to issuing the first month's benefits . . . . .	1	2
(i) Do not eliminate postponed verification entirely, but require that items in addition to identification be verified prior to issuing the first month's benefits . . . . .	1	2
IF "YES": What additional items should be verified?		
_____		
_____		
(j) Eliminate the requirement to verify identity . . . . .	1	2
(k) Other (SPECIFY) _____	1	2
(l) Other (SPECIFY) _____	1	2

3.9 Would you like to raise any other issue that we haven't covered that you feel is important?

YES . . . . . 1  
NO (GO TO SECTION 4) . . . . . 2

a) IF "YES": Please explain.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### Section 4: Study Site(s)

RESEARCHER: Repeat name(s) of study site(s)

4.1 Are there any particular features of the expedited service procedures in (this/these) office(s) that are noteworthy or different than those of other offices in the State?

- If so, explain.



## **Evaluation of Expedited Service in the Food Stamp Program**

**LOCAL PUBLIC ASSISTANCE OFFICE DIRECTOR  
DIRECTOR OF FOOD STAMP PROGRAM  
INTAKE SUPERVISOR**

### **INTERVIEW**

Conducted by:

Abt Associates Inc.  
101 North Wacker Drive  
Suite 400  
Chicago, Illinois 60606

<b>SITE</b>	
<b>DATES OF INTERVIEW</b>	
<b>Section 1</b>	
<b>Section 2</b>	
<b>Section 3</b>	
<b>Section 4</b>	
<b>Section 5</b>	
<b>Section 6</b>	
<b>Section 7</b>	
<b>INTERVIEWER ID</b>	

# SECTION 1: ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING

1. I'd like to discuss how your staff is currently organized to administer the Food Stamp Program.

A. How are units arranged?

NUMBER OF UNITS	FUNCTION

	YES	NO
B. Do different units or workers perform intake and recertification?	1	2
C. Do different units or workers within units manage PA and NPA/NA food stamp cases?	1	2
D. Do caseworkers certify clients for programs other than food stamps (AFDC, Medicaid, other)?	1	2
E. Does this office have a unit that serves food stamp applicants that are homeless?	1	2

2. Is there a specific unit or specialized workers that handle expedited service cases?

YES ..... 1 ASK A  
NO ..... 2 SKIP TO Q.3

A. IF "YES": Does this unit handle...

PA cases only, ..... 1  
NPA/NA cases only, or ..... 2  
both PA and NPA/NA cases? ..... 3

3. Does this office use volunteers in certifying households for food stamps?

YES ..... 1 ASK A  
 NO ..... 2 SKIP TO Q.4

A. What is the role of volunteers? Do they ...

	YES	NO
1. help applicants complete applications?	1	2
2. translate for clients?	1	2
3. screen applicants for expedited service processing?	1	2
4. help with verification?	1	2
5. perform other roles?  IF "YES": Specify:  _____  _____  _____	1	2

4. In total, how many eligibility workers for the Food Stamp Program do you have in this office?  
 (Please include eligibility workers at satellite offices or outposts that are connected to this office.)

|\_\_\_\_\_| NUMBER OF ELIGIBILITY WORKERS

A. How many work full time?

|\_\_\_\_\_| NUMBER OF FULL-TIME

B. How many work part time?

|\_\_\_\_\_| NUMBER OF PART-TIME IF "ZERO," GO TO 5

- C. For those eligibility workers who are part time, on average, what percent of time do they work?

|\_\_\_\_\_| PERCENT OF TIME WORKED

5. Describe the type and number of staff, both full- and part-time, that are involved in processing food stamp applications.

Position	# full time	% of time spent on initial certification activities	# part time	% of time worked, on average	% of time spent on initial certification activities
Supervisor of eligibility workers	_____	_____ %	_____	_____ %	_____ %
Eligibility worker	_____	_____ %	_____	_____ %	_____ %
Assistant eligibility worker	_____	_____ %	_____	_____ %	_____ %
Clerk/Receptionist	_____	_____ %	_____	_____ %	_____ %
Data entry clerk	_____	_____ %	_____	_____ %	_____ %
OTHER (specify)	_____	_____ %	_____	_____ %	_____ %
_____	_____	_____ %	_____	_____ %	_____ %
_____	_____	_____ %	_____	_____ %	_____ %
_____	_____	_____ %	_____	_____ %	_____ %

6. In the past two years, has there been either a hiring freeze or a reduction in the number of food stamp staff in this office?

YES ..... 1  
NO ..... 2

#### APPLICANT KNOWLEDGE AND OFFICE OUTREACH

7. In your opinion, about what percent of applicants know about expedited service?

|\_\_\_\_\_| PERCENT OF APPLICANTS



8. Does your office conduct any type of outreach to potential food stamp recipients? (Outreach might include posters, brochures, or public service announcements to alert potential clients to the availability of services.)

YES ..... 1 ASK A  
NO ..... 2 GO TO SECTION 2

A. IF "YES": Please describe these efforts.

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9. Does your office conduct any type of outreach geared specifically to individuals or households that might be entitled to expedited service processing?

YES ..... 1 ASK A  
NO ..... 2 GO TO SECTION 2

A. IF "YES": Please describe these efforts.

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SECTION 2: EXPEDITED SERVICE PROCEDURES AT INITIAL APPLICATION

10. Now I'd like to discuss the application process for expedited service applicants, from the client's initial contact with the office and application to the Program, through the certification interview. I hope first to get an overall view of the process, and then to discuss specific steps in this process.

A. To begin, please tell me what happens when the client first enters the office. Does the client... (*CIRCLE ONE*)

- |   |   |                                   |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| Complete an application form; .....   | 1 | SHOW MODELS 1 & 2                 |
| Complete a <u>separate</u> form that screens for expedited service eligibility; ..... | 2 | SHOW MODELS 3, 4, & 5             |
| Have a screening interview; or .....  | 3 | SHOW MODELS 6 & 7                 |
| Move directly to the certification interview? .....                                   | 4 | A S K<br>QUESTION IN<br>BOX BELOW |

During the certification interview, is the application completed and the expedited service status determined?

- |          |   |   |
|----------|---|---|
| YES..... | 1 | CODE "9" IN B, THEN<br>GO TO Q. 12                              |
| NO ..... | 2 | SHOW ALL MODELS.<br>ASK R TO SELECT<br>THE APPROPRIATE<br>MODEL |

B. Which of the following models most closely illustrates the process for handling expedited service applicants in your office? (We will talk about any differences between this model and your office's procedures in a moment.)

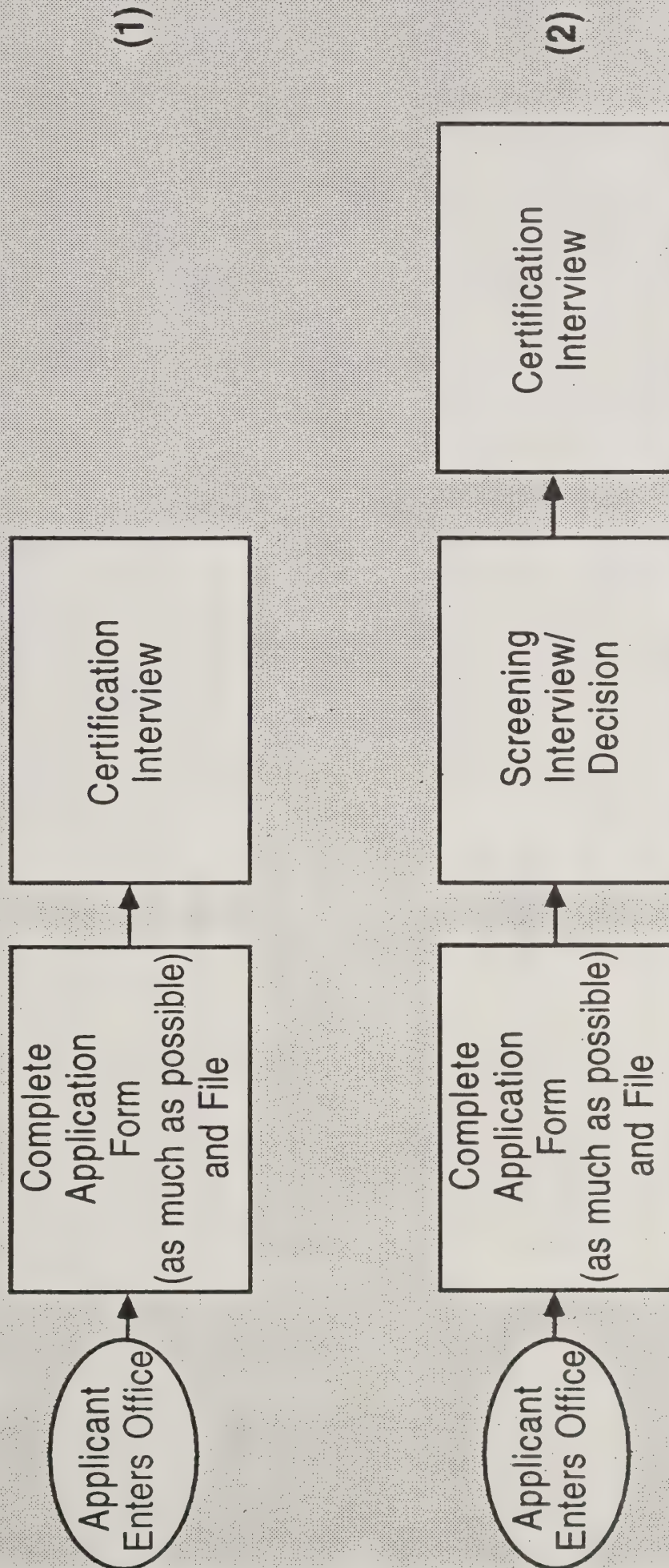
IF NO MODEL APPLIES, CODE "8" AND FILL IN THE BLANK BOXES IN MODEL 8.

|\_\_\_\_\_| MODEL NUMBER

# Food Stamp Application Process

## First Step:

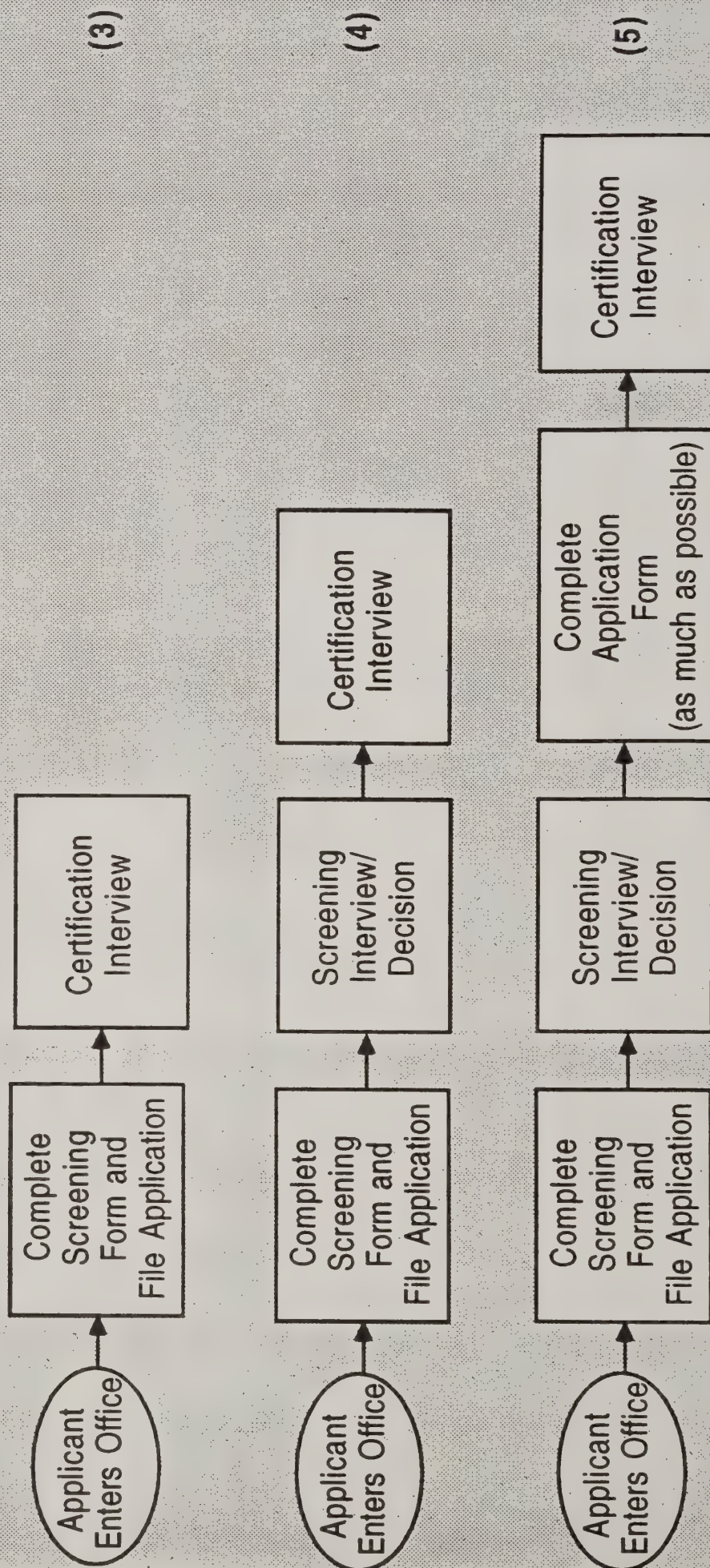
### Complete Application Form





# Food Stamp Application Process

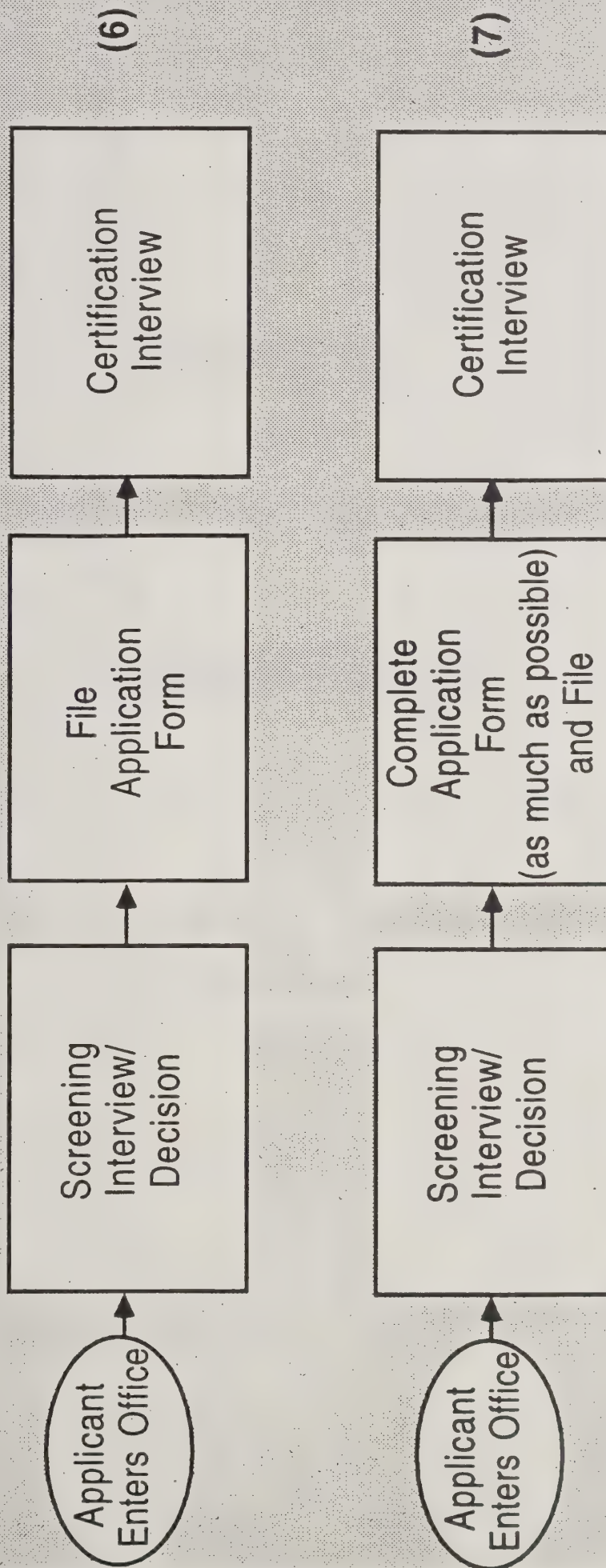
## First Step: Complete Screening Form





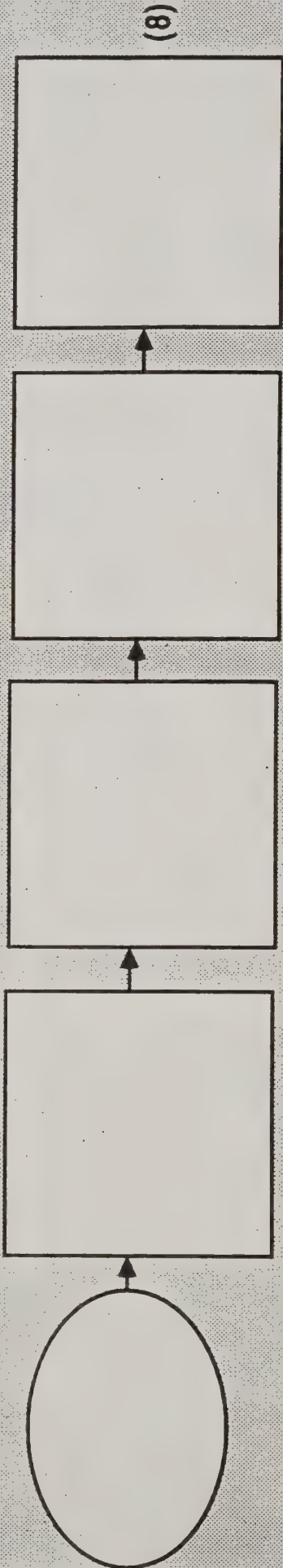
# Food Stamp Application Process

## First Step: Screening Interview or Decision





# Food Stamp Application Process



11. I'll be asking more specific questions about the application process in a moment; but first, I'd like you to describe any differences or variations between your procedures and those illustrated in this model.

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12. Is this process the same for regular 30-day applicants?

YES ..... 1  
NO ..... 2    *ASK A*

- A. Which model most closely represents the process for regular applicants?

|     | MODEL NUMBER

Let's talk more specifically about the application process and expedited service.

### INTERVIEWER CHECK:

Does this office screen applicants for expedited service entitlement prior to the certification interview?

YES ..... 1    *SKIP TO Q.13*  
NO ..... 2    *SKIP TO Q.15*

13. First, let's talk about screening for expedited service.

- A. Who conducts the screening?

SUPERVISOR ..... 01  
ELIGIBILITY WORKER ..... 02  
ASSISTANT ELIGIBILITY WORKER ..... 03  
CLERK ..... 04  
RECEPTIONIST ..... 05  
VOLUNTEER ..... 06  
OTHER (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_ 07

- B. When does screening take place?

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**C. How is it done?**

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**D. Does the person who conducts the screening ask questions related to all four expedited service criteria?**

YES .....	1
NO .....	2
DON'T KNOW .....	8

**E. FOR OFFICES USING A SEPARATE SCREENING FORM (MODELS 3-5):**

Do all applicants complete the screening form?

YES .....	1	<b>SKIP TO Q.14</b>
NO .....	2	

**IF "NO": Why don't all applicants complete the screening form?**

---

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**14. In general, how accurate is the screening of expedited service clients?**

**A. What percent of those initially screened as expedited service turn out not to be entitled to expedited service?**

| \_\_\_\_\_ | PERCENT

**When is this discrepancy discovered?**

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**B. Of cases screened as being entitled to expedited service, how many are found to be ineligible for food stamps at the certification interview?**

| \_\_\_\_\_ | PERCENT



- C. What percent of expedited service clients are found to be entitled to this service only at the time of the certification interview?

|\_\_\_\_\_| PERCENT

For what reasons does this happen?

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#### COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FORM

15. In most cases, who actually fills out the application form -- the applicant or the eligibility worker?

APPLICANT .....	1
ELIGIBILITY WORKER .....	2
BOTH .....	3

#### CERTIFICATION INTERVIEW

16. Who usually conducts the certification interview?

SUPERVISOR .....	1
ELIGIBILITY WORKER .....	2
ASSISTANT ELIGIBILITY WORKER .....	3
OTHER (SPECIFY)_____ .....	4

17. Is the certification interview conducted fully or partially using a computer?

YES .....	1
NO .....	2

18. How many days after the expedited service client first visits the office does the certification interview usually take place?

|\_\_\_\_\_| NUMBER OF DAYS

OR

SAME DAY ..... 1

## VERIFICATION

19. What percent of expedited service applicants have postponed verification . . . that is, all verification is not provided until after first issuance?

| \_\_\_\_\_ | PERCENT POSTPONED VERIFICATION

- A. What percent of these cases provide the required information within the allowable timeframe (that is, 30 or 60 days)?

| \_\_\_\_\_ | PERCENT

- B. What verification items are most likely to be missing after the allowable 30 or 60 days? *CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.*

- 01 Personal identification
- 02 Social Security number or card
- 03 Proof of address
- 04 Alien status
- 05 Earned income
- 06 Unearned income
- 07 Vehicle ownership
- 08 Bank statement
- 09 Other resources and assets (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 Rent
- 11 Utility bills
- 12 Medical bills
- 13 Dependent care/child care expenses
- 14 Notice of job termination
- 15 Proof of work registration
- 16 OTHER (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_
- 17 OTHER (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_
- 18 OTHER (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

## ELIGIBILITY AND BENEFIT DETERMINATION

20. How is eligibility and the amount of the food stamp benefit determined for expedited service cases? Is it...

calculated by hand, or ..... 1  
is it automated? ..... 2

- A. Is the process different for subsequent months?

No, not different ..... 1 **GO TO Q.21**  
Yes, subsequent months' automated ..... 2 **ASK B**  
Yes, subsequent months' calculated by hand ..... 3 **ASK B**

B. IF "YES": How is it done?

---

---

21. What steps in expedited service processing do supervisors review? *CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.*

Expedited service criteria .....	1
Benefit amount .....	2
Verification .....	3
OTHER (SPECIFY) .....	4

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---

A. Does this review take place before or after benefits are issued?

BEFORE .....	1
AFTER .....	2

B. Which eligibility workers are reviewed? It is ...

<u>new</u> workers <u>only</u> , or .....	1
<u>all</u> eligibility workers? .....	2

22. How long is the food stamp certification period for...

A. regular 30-day applicants?

|\_\_\_\_\_| MONTHS

B. expedited service cases with postponed verification?

|\_\_\_\_\_| MONTHS

C. expedited service cases without postponed verification?

|\_\_\_\_\_| MONTHS

23. IF A RANGE OF TIME PERIODS IS CITED FOR EITHER REGULAR OR EXPEDITED SERVICE CERTIFICATION PERIODS: What factors are considered when defining the length of the certification period?

Stability of the household's situation .....	1
Type of case .....	2
Other (SPECIFY) .....	3

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#### OTHER APPLICATION PROCESSING ISSUES

24. Do any of the application procedures we've just discussed differ depending on the applicant's expedited service eligibility criteria? For example, are procedures different for homeless applicants?

YES .....	1	ASK A
NO .....	2	SKIP TO Q.25

- A. IF "YES": Please describe them.

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25. Do expedited service policies and procedures in this office go beyond the guidelines established by the State in any of the following areas?

	YES	NO
A. Time frame for providing benefits  <i>IF "YES": Describe differences</i> _____ _____	1	2
B. Verification requirements and timeframe for completing verification  <i>IF "YES": Describe differences</i> _____ _____	1	2
C. Other difference (SPECIFY)  <i>IF "YES": Describe differences</i> _____ _____	1	2
D. Other difference (SPECIFY)  <i>IF "YES": Describe differences</i> _____ _____	1	2
E. Other changes (SPECIFY)  <i>IF "YES": Describe differences</i> _____ _____	1	2

26. Do the procedures we have discussed in the preceding questions differ from those for regularly-processed food stamp applicants (apart from verification requirements)?

YES ..... 1 ASK A-D  
 NO ..... 2 GO TO SECTION 3

IF "YES":

	YES	NO
<p>A. Do screening procedures differ for regularly-processed applicants?</p> <p>IF "YES": How do they differ?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	1	2
<p>B. Do procedures for conducting the certification interview differ from regularly-processed applicants?</p> <p>IF "YES": How do they differ?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>For regularly-processed applicants, how many days after submitting an application are certification interviews generally scheduled?</p> <p>  _____   NUMBER OF DAYS</p>	1	2
<p>C. Apart from requirements, do verification procedures differ from regularly-processed applicants?</p> <p>IF "YES": How do they differ?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	1	2
<p>D. Do procedures for determining eligibility for food stamps and benefit determination differ for regularly-processed applicants?</p> <p>IF "YES": How do they differ?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	1	2

SECTION 3: FOOD STAMP ISSUANCE

27. How are the first month's food stamps issued to expedited service clients?

ATP (MAILED TO CLIENT OR ISSUANCE POINT) .	1
COUPONS MAILED TO CLIENT .....	2
OVER THE COUNTER (COUPONS ISSUED DIRECTLY TO CLIENT AT OFFICE OR ISSUANCE POINT) ..	3
EBT (ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER) .....	4
OTHER (DESCRIBE BELOW) .....	5

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28. How are food stamp benefits issued for the first time to regularly-processed applicants?

ATP (MAILED TO CLIENT OR ISSUANCE POINT) .	1
COUPONS MAILED TO CLIENT .....	2
OVER THE COUNTER (COUPONS ISSUED DIRECTLY TO CLIENT AT OFFICE OR ISSUANCE POINT) ..	3
EBT (ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER) .....	4
OTHER (DESCRIBE BELOW) .....	5

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---

29. How are food stamp benefits issued after the first month?

ATP (MAILED TO CLIENT OR ISSUANCE POINT) .	1
COUPONS MAILED TO CLIENT .....	2
OVER THE COUNTER (COUPONS ISSUED DIRECTLY TO CLIENT AT OFFICE OR ISSUANCE POINT) ..	3
EBT (ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER) .....	4
OTHER (DESCRIBE BELOW) .....	5

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30. Apart from what we just discussed, are there any (other) differences in issuance procedures?  
For instance,

A. Is issuance for expedited service clients done manually?

YES .....	1
NO .....	2

**B. Are there differences in procedures depending on expedited service criteria (e.g., for homeless clients, other clients)?**

YES .....	1
NO .....	2

**IF "YES": Please describe them.**

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**31. Does this office have a staggered issuance schedule?**

YES .....	1	ASK A
NO .....	2	SKIP TO Q.32

**A. Please describe this schedule.**

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**32. How often is it a problem that expedited service applicants do not pick up or cash their benefits?**

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SECTION 4: NUMBER OF EXPEDITED SERVICE APPLICANTS

33. What was the total food stamp caseload in this office in June 1993?

|\_\_\_\_\_| NUMBER OF CASES

34. A. How many applications for food stamps -- both NPA/NA and PA -- were taken in this office in June 1993? (Include applications taken in main office and any sub-offices and outposts, if applicable.)

|\_\_\_\_\_| NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS

B. How many food stamp applications were approved in June 1993?

|\_\_\_\_\_| NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS

35. Does the total number of food stamp applicant households in this office -- both regular 30-day and expedited service -- vary during the course of the year? For instance, does it vary seasonally?

YES .....	1	
NO .....	2	SKIP TO Q.36

A. When and by how much does it vary? (In what months or seasons? By what percent?)

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Why do these variations occur?

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B. Are there seasonal variations because of migrant worker circumstances?

YES .....	1
NO .....	2

36. Approximately what percentage of all initial applicant households in this office currently receive expedited service processing?

|\_\_\_\_\_| PERCENT

A. What percent of households applying for food stamps only currently receive expedited service?

|\_\_\_\_\_| PERCENT

B. What percent of households applying for AFDC and other public assistance currently receive expedited processing for food stamps?

|\_\_\_\_\_| PERCENT

37. A. Approximately what percent of all expedited service households in this office are homeless?

|\_\_\_\_\_| PERCENT

B. Approximately what percent of all expedited service households are destitute migrant or seasonal farm workers?

|\_\_\_\_\_| PERCENT

38. Does the percent of food stamp applicant households receiving expedited service vary during the year in this office?

YES .....	1	ASK A & B
NO .....	2	SKIP TO Q.39

A. When and by how much does it vary? (In what months or seasons? By what percent?)

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Why do these variations occur?

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B. Are there seasonal patterns related to the homeless? to other groups?

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39. Has the percent of expedited service cases changed over the last two years?

YES .....	1	ASK A
NO .....	2	SKIP TO Q.40

A. How has it changed?

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40. Does this office have a higher or lower proportion of expedited service cases than other offices in the State, or is it about the same proportion?

HIGHER .....	1	ASK A
LOWER .....	2	ASK A
SAME .....	3	SKIP TO Q.41
DON'T KNOW .....	8	SKIP TO Q.41

A. What factors account for the difference?

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41. Is the information you have provided concerning the numbers of expedited service applicants based to some degree on data from automated information systems or internal studies, or is it based entirely on staff observations and experience?

DATA FROM SYSTEMS/STUDIES .....	1	ASK A & B
STAFF OBSERVATIONS/EXPERIENCE .....	2	SKIP TO Q.42

A. What data have you used in providing these answers? What year(s) do(es) these data cover? *PROBE FOR DATA SOURCES AND YEARS REPORTED.*

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B. In your opinion, how accurate or reliable are these data? (Please explain your answer.)

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42. How would you describe the characteristics of the expedited service population in this office?  
For instance, . . .

	YES	NO
A. Do expedited service households tend to be <u>younger</u> than the average food stamp applicant household?	1	2
B. Do expedited service households tend to be <u>older</u> than the average applicant household?	1	2
C. Do more individuals than families with children receive expedited service?	1	2
D. Do households receiving expedited service tend more often to be female-headed households?	1	2
E. Do expedited service households tend to be unemployed rather than employed?	1	2
F. Are there more expedited service households applying simultaneously for public assistance than there are applying for food stamps only?	1	2
G. Are expedited service households in this office predominantly homeless?	1	2
H. Are there any other ways in which you would characterize the expedited service population in this office?  IF "YES": Please describe.  _____  _____	1	2



43. Is there a "typical" type of expedited service case?

YES ..... 1 ASK A  
NO ..... 2 SKIP TO Q.44

IF "YES": What are the characteristics of the "typical" expedited service case?

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44. Does this office have a way to measure the percent of expedited service cases that actually receive benefits within five calendar days?

YES ..... 1 ASK A-C  
NO ..... 2 ASK D

A. IF "YES": What mechanism is used to do this?

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B. Do you monitor this on a regular basis?

YES ..... 1  
NO ..... 2

C. What percent of expedited service clients receive benefits within five calendar days?

|\_\_\_\_\_| PERCENT SKIP TO Q.45

D. IF "NO": What is your best estimate of the percent of expedited service clients that receive benefits within five calendar days?

|\_\_\_\_\_| PERCENT

45. Are there any situations in which the five day period begins earlier than the date the application is filed?

YES ..... 1 ASK A  
NO ..... 2 GO TO SECTION 5

A. IF "YES": Under what circumstances does this happen?

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## SECTION 5: FACTORS AFFECTING THE SIZE OF THE EXPEDITED SERVICE POPULATION

46. What types of employment form the economic base in the area served by your office? For instance, what are the major types of industries and businesses in the area? How do most people make a living?

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47. How would you characterize the economic climate in your service area? In general, is your area better off, worse off, or about the same as the rest of the state?

BETTER ..... 1  
 WORSE ..... 2  
 SAME ..... 3 *SKIP TO Q.48*

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In these next questions, let's focus on events that have occurred within the past two years.

48. A. Within the past two years, how has the economic climate changed? In general, has the economic climate ...

improved. .... 1  
 stayed the same, or ..... 2  
 has it deteriorated? ..... 3

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	YES	NO
B. Within the past two years ...		
1. Have there been any major plant closings?	1	2
2. Have any major employers laid off large numbers of workers?	1	2
3. Have any new business opened or relocated here?	1	2
4. Have any major employers expanded the size of their work force?	1	2

- C. Given what you've just told me, has there been an overall increase or decrease in the number of jobs, or has there been no change in the past two years?

INCREASE .....	1
DECREASE .....	2
NO CHANGE .....	3

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49. A. Within the past two years, has there been an increase or decrease in the size of the homeless population?

INCREASE .....	1
DECREASE .....	2
NO CHANGE .....	3

- B. Has there been an influx of new low-income residents?

YES .....	1
NO .....	2

- C. Has there been an increase in the number of migrant or seasonal farm workers?

YES .....	1
NO .....	2

- D. Within the past two years, have there been (other) changes in size of or type of people who make up the area's low-income population?

YES .....	1
NO .....	2

*IF "YES":* Please describe.

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- E. Has there been a change in the type of people applying for food stamps over the past two years? For example, have you seen an increase in the number of middle-class households applying for food stamps?

YES ..... 1  
 NO ..... 2 *SKIP TO Q.50*

*IF "YES": Please describe.*

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50. In the past two years, have there been any changes in the coverage and benefit levels of any of the following public assistance programs?

	YES	NO
<b>A. AFDC/ADC?</b>  <i>IF "YES": Please describe the change</i> <hr/> <hr/>	1	2
<b>B. General Assistance/General Relief/Home Relief?</b>  <i>IF "YES": Please describe the change</i> <hr/> <hr/>	1	2
<b>C. County or local welfare programs?</b>  <i>IF "YES": Please describe the change</i> <hr/> <hr/>	1	2
<b>D. Other assistance programs? (SPECIFY)</b>  <i>IF "YES": Please describe the change</i> <hr/> <hr/>	1	2



SECTION 6: ISSUES IN EXPEDITED SERVICE AND SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGE

51. To what degree do the expedited service provisions of the Food Stamp Program succeed in meeting the emergency food needs of low-income families? Please answer on a scale from "1" to "5" where "1" means "not at all successful" and "5" means "very successful."

NOT AT ALL SUCCESSFUL .....	1
.....	2
.....	3
.....	4
VERY SUCCESSFUL .....	5

52. What do you see as the major strength of expedited service? Please explain.

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53. What do you see as the major problem with expedited service? Please explain.

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54. Now I'd like to ask you how you feel about a variety of expedited service issues.

I'm going to read a list of issues that some people have raised. I'd like you to tell me, based on your experience in this office, whether or not you consider any issue to be a problem. In answering, please think in terms of a scale from "1" to "5," in which "1" means that this is not a problem, and "5" is a major problem.

		Not a Problem			Major Problem	
		1	2	3	4	5
a.	Meeting the 5 calendar day processing standard					
b.	Arranging schedule to handle the necessary expedited service interviews each day					
c.	Expedited service applicants failing to appear for certification interview					
d.	Approved expedited service applicants failing to pick up first month's benefits					
e.	Difficulty determining whether applicants meet expedited service criteria	1	2	3	4	5
f.	Applicants intentionally misrepresenting circumstances to appear entitled to expedited service	1	2	3	4	5
g.	Applicants not in urgent need of emergency assistance receiving expedited service processing	1	2	3	4	5
h.	Applicants in urgent need of food assistance not receiving expedited service processing under current rules	1	2	3	4	5
i.	Difficulty moving between rules for processing regular and expedited service cases	1	2	3	4	5
j.	Postponed verification making verification process more complicated	1	2	3	4	5
k.	Joint processing of expedited service cases also applying for AFDC	1	2	3	4	5
l.	Applicants to be screened or interviewed waiting too long in the office	1	2	3	4	5
m.	Prorated benefits not being sufficient to meet food needs	1	2	3	4	5
n.	Many applicants being entitled to expedited service receiving benefits for only one month suggesting that they are not in need of emergency assistance	1	2	3	4	5

		Not a Problem				Major Problem
o.	Households receiving benefits in more than one county or service area within the same month	1	2	3	4	5
p.	Applicants qualifying for expedited service failing to bring verification due to complicated application forms	1	2	3	4	5
q.	Other problem (SPECIFY)	1	2	3	4	5
	_____					
	_____					
	_____					

55. Has your office made any changes in the way you process expedited service cases that has improved your operations or service delivery to clients?

A. For example, have you implemented procedures that increase the accuracy of screening?

YES ..... 1  
 NO ..... 2 GO TO B

IF "YES": Please describe any change and its effect.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

B. Have you implemented procedures that resulted in more timely delivery of food stamp benefits?

YES ..... 1  
 NO ..... 2 GO TO C

IF "YES": Please describe any change and its effect.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- C. Have you implemented procedures that have increased the overall efficiency of expedited service operations?

YES ..... 1  
NO ..... 2 GO TO D

IF "YES": Please describe any change and its effect.

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- D. Have you implemented procedures aimed at reducing error or potential fraud?

YES ..... 1  
NO ..... 2 GO TO E

IF "YES": Please describe any change and its effect.

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- E. Have you made any other changes that have resulted in improvements?

YES ..... 1  
NO ..... 2 SKIP TO Q.56

IF "YES": Please describe any change and its effect.

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56. Are there any other aspects of your application processing procedures that make expedited service work well? Please describe.

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57. Now I'd like to talk about possible actions that you would like to undertake in this office in order to improve expedited service processing. Would you like to ...

**A. Additional staff**

YES ..... 1  
NO ..... 2

*IF "YES": What type of staff are needed?*

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**B. Additional staff training**

YES ..... 1  
NO ..... 2

*IF "YES": What kind of training would be most useful?*

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**C. Additional assistance or information on expedited service provided to clients to help them complete their part of the process (for example, provide a hotline or help with verification)**

YES ..... 1  
NO ..... 2

*IF "YES": What assistance or information would be helpful to clients?*

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**D. An automated system for tracking applications**

YES ..... 1  
NO ..... 2  
ALREADY HAVE ONE ..... 8

**E. Other changes (SPECIFY)**

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58. If you could make one change in Federal expedited service policy or procedures, what would it be? Please explain why you would make this change.

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59. People have suggested many kinds of changes to the Federal rules for expedited service. What do you think about each one of these suggested changes? *CIRCLE "YES" OR "NO" FOR EACH ITEM.*

	YES	NO	
A. Modify the 5 calendar day standard by:			
a. Extending it to 7 calendar days	1	2	
b. Changing it to 5 working days	1	2	
c. Returning to a 3 working-day rule	1	2	
d. Having more Federal guidelines for extending the deadline on a case-by-case basis... for example, if a client misses an interview	1	2	If "YES": For what types of situations would you like to see extensions permitted?
e. Would you like to see any other change to the current standard?	1	2	IF "YES", SPECIFY:
B. Eliminate any of the following expedited service entitlement criteria <u>entirely</u> :			
a. Homeless	1	2	
b. Migrant and seasonal farm worker	1	2	
c. Shelter expenses exceed income and liquid resources	1	2	
d. Gross income (<\$150) and asset (≤\$100) levels	1	2	
C. Broaden the expedited service entitlement criteria to include another household category	1	2	IF "YES": What category?

	YES	NO	
D. Make the following changes in the program definition of "homeless":			
a. Do not define as "homeless" persons in shelters or institutions that provide meals.	1	2	
b. Restrict the definition of "temporary" for persons living temporarily in the residence of another individual.	1	2	IF "YES": What type of time limit would you suggest? <input type="text"/> MONTHS
c. For persons living temporarily in the residence of another individual, limit eligibility to persons living temporarily with a <u>nonfamily</u> member.	1	2	
d. Would you <u>expand</u> the definition of "homeless" in any way?	1	2	IF "YES": In what way?
e. Would you change anything (else) about the program definition of "homeless"?	1	2	IF "YES": SPECIFY
E. Change the \$150 gross income limit for expedited service to some other amount	1	2	IF "YES": To what amount?
F. Change the \$100 asset limit for expedited service to some other amount	1	2	IF "YES": To what amount?
G. Tie income and asset limits to family size	1	2	
H. Eliminate postponed verification entirely. That is, require that all verification be completed prior to issuing the first month's benefits	1	2	
I. Do not eliminate postponed verification entirely, but require that items in addition to identification be verified prior to issuing the first month's benefits	1	2	IF "YES": What additional items should be verified?

	YES	NO	
J. Eliminate the requirement to verify identity.	1	2	
K. OTHER	1	2	SPECIFY
L. OTHER	1	2	SPECIFY

60. Would you like to raise any other issues that we have not covered that you feel is important?

YES ..... 1  
 NO ..... 2

IF "YES": Please explain.

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SECTION 7: CASE PROCESSING TIMES

61. For each of the following steps in the application process, please estimate how many minutes, on average, it takes to handle a case in each of the following categories. Consider the time of the worker who is mainly involved in this task.

<b>A. Expedited Service, also applying for Public Assistance</b>		
1. Screening to determine expedited service entitlement		minutes
2. Certification interview (including scheduling the interview)		minutes
3. Verification activities that occur <u>after</u> the certification interview		minutes
4. Calculating food stamp eligibility and benefit amount		minutes
5. Activities to issue the initial food stamp benefit (i.e., filling in forms, coding,		minutes
6. OTHER (SPECIFY) _____ _____ _____		minutes
TOTAL TIME for section A.		minutes
FOR ITEMS "B" THROUGH "D", PLEASE REPORT TOTAL TIME ONLY. (IT MAY BE HELPFUL TO REFER TO THE STEPS IN THE APPLICATION PROCESS LISTED ABOVE IN "A".)		
B. Expedited service, food stamps only (total)		minutes
C. Regular 30-day, also applying for PA (total)		minutes
D. Regular 30-day, food stamps only (total)		minutes

62. If you were required to handle expedited service cases in the same way that you handle regular 30-day cases, would it take you more time, the same amount of time, or less time? *PLEASE CIRCLE ONE ANSWER AND EXPLAIN BELOW.*

MORE TIME ..... 1  
SAME AMOUNT OF TIME ..... 2  
LESS TIME ..... 3

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63. On average, how long does a recertification take for ...

A. an NPA/NA food stamp case?

|\_\_\_\_\_| MINUTES

B. a PA food stamp case?

|\_\_\_\_\_| MINUTES

**Thank you for your assistance.**

## **Evaluation of Expedited Service in the Food Stamp Program**

### **ADVOCACY GROUP REPRESENTATIVE**

#### **INTERVIEW**

Conducted by:

Abt Associates Inc.  
101 North Wacker Drive  
Suite 400  
Chicago, Illinois 60606

<b>SITE</b>	
<b>DATE OF INTERVIEW</b>	
<b>INTERVIEWER ID</b>	

## Section 1: Background and Institutional Relationships

### 1. What is your position with the organization?

DIRECTOR .....	1
ATTORNEY .....	2
PARALEGAL .....	3
NONLAWYER ADVOCATE .....	4
OUTREACH WORKER .....	5
OTHER (SPECIFY) .....	6

### 2. Now I'd like to ask you about the purpose and background of your organization.

#### A. What are your organization's major goals and activities?

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#### B. What population does your organization serve?

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#### C. What geographic area does it cover?

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### 3. Now I'd like to ask you about the type of interaction and relationship your organization has with the State and local agencies responsible for administering the Food Stamp Program.

#### A. On what types of issues have you been in contact with (this agency/these agencies)?

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#### B. How frequent is this contact with the food stamp agency?

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#### C. What is the nature of the contact? For example, is it helpful, cooperative, or adversarial?

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4. Does your organization help clients apply for food stamps?

YES ..... 1  
NO ..... 2

5. Does anyone in your organization ever act as an authorized representative for food stamp applicants?

YES ..... 1  
NO ..... 2

6. Does your organization provide information about the Food Stamp Program to clients?

YES ..... 1 *ASK A*  
NO ..... 2 *GO TO Q. 8*

A. Please describe this information and how it is provided.

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7. Does your organization provide information on expedited service to clients?

YES ..... 1 *ASK A*  
NO ..... 2 *GO TO Q. 8*

A. Please describe this information and how it is provided.

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## Section 2: Expedited Service Processing in the Local Office

Now I'd like to talk about how (LOCAL FOOD STAMP OFFICE NAME) provides expedited service benefits.

In answering this next question, please think about a scale from "1" to "5," where "1" is "not at all effective" and "5" is "very effective." I'll also ask you to explain your answer.

8. How effective is the local office in identifying applicants that qualify for expedited service processing?

Not at all effective ..... 1  
..... 2  
..... 3  
..... 4  
Very effective ..... 5

A. Please explain your answer and the basis for your judgement.

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9. For cases that have been identified as expedited service cases, how often does the local office issue benefits within the five-day processing standard? Would you say...

nearly all the time, ..... 1  
most of the time, ..... 2  
some of the time, or ..... 3  
almost none of the time? ..... 4

- A. IF CODES 2, 3, OR 4: Why is it that this does not always happen? What is the basis for your judgement?

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10. Please think now about the four types of households that are entitled to expedited service processing: the homeless, destitute migrant or seasonal farmworkers, those whose shelter expenses exceed income, and those with income and assets below the guidelines.

Are there any differences in the accuracy with which any of these groups is identified or screened?

YES ..... 1  
NO ..... 2 GO TO Q.11  
DON'T KNOW ..... 8 GO TO Q.11

- A. Which group(s) of households (is/are) more difficult for the local office to accurately identify when they apply for benefits?

Homeless ..... 1  
Shelter expenses exceed income ..... 2  
Migrant or seasonal farmworker ..... 3  
Below income or asset limits ..... 4

- B. Why is it difficult to accurately identify (this/these) group(s)?

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11. Are there any differences in the local office's ability to deliver benefits within five calendar days to the different groups entitled to expedited service?

- YES ..... 1
- NO ..... 2    *GO TO Q.12*
- DON'T KNOW ..... 8    *GO TO Q.12*

A. For which group(s) of households is it difficult for the local office to meet the five calendar day standard?

- Homeless ..... 1
- Shelter expenses exceed income ..... 2
- Migrant or seasonal farmworker ..... 3
- Below income or asset limits ..... 4

B. Why is it difficult for (this/these) group(s)?

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12. What aspects of the local office's application processing procedures make expedited service work well? Please describe.

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13. What problems and complaints do you receive from food stamp applicants with respect to expedited service processing? *CIRCLE ALL "PROBLEMS" THAT THE RESPONDENT MENTIONS. THEN, FOR ITEMS NOT MENTIONED, ASK IF EACH IS A PROBLEM. FINALLY, PROBE FOR ANY OTHER PROBLEMS.*

PROBLEM/COMPLAINT	YES, MENTIONED WITHOUT PROMPTING	YES, WITH PROMPTING	NO
a. Applicants to be screened or interviewed waiting too long in the office	1	2	3
b. Applicants having to return to the office too many times	1	2	3
c. Applicants having trouble getting answers to their questions	1	2	3
d. Applicants for PA needing two separate applications or interviews	1	2	3
e. Application form being too complicated	1	2	3
f. Applicants not being told about expedited service	1	2	3
g. Applicants not receiving expedited service benefits within five days	1	2	3
h. Expedited service applicants being required to provide verification other than identity to get first month's benefits	1	2	3
i. Verification requirements being complicated	1	2	3
j. Workers not telling applicants when verification items are due	1	2	3
k. Screening procedures not being good	1	2	3
l. The office not having enough qualified staff	1	2	3
m. Prorated benefits not being sufficient to meet food needs	1	2	3
n. Other problem (SPECIFY)	1	2	3
o. Other problem (SPECIFY)	1	2	3
p. Other problem (SPECIFY)	1	2	3



**14. Within Federal regulations, what changes would improve expedited service processing in the food stamp office? DO NOT READ CATEGORIES. CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY, THEN ASK FOLLOWUP ITEMS FOR EACH CIRCLED ITEM.**

**A. Additional staff**

YES ..... 1  
NO ..... 2

**IF "YES": What type of staff are needed?**

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**B. Additional staff training**

YES ..... 1  
NO ..... 2

**IF "YES": What kind of training would be most useful?**

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---

**C. Additional assistance or information on expedited service provided to clients to help them complete their part of the process (for example, provide a hotline or help with verification)**

YES ..... 1  
NO ..... 2

**IF "YES": What assistance or information would be helpful to clients?**

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**D. An automated system for tracking applications**

YES ..... 1  
NO ..... 2  
ALREADY HAVE ONE ..... 8

**E. Other changes (SPECIFY)**

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15. IF "YES" TO ANY CHANGE (A-E): In your opinion, what prevents the local office from implementing (this change/these changes)?

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16. Of the changes you have just discussed, which one is the most important? **WRITE THE LETTER THAT CORRESPONDS TO THE RESPONDENT'S ANSWER.**

|        | LETTER

**Section 3: Issues in Expedited Service and Suggestions for Change**

Let's talk more generally about expedited service policy.

17. To what degree do the expedited service provisions of the Food Stamp Program succeed in meeting the emergency food needs of low-income families?

Please answer on a scale from "1" to "5" where "1" means "not at all successful" and "5" means "very successful."

NOT AT ALL SUCCESSFUL .....	1
.....	2
.....	3
.....	4
VERY SUCCESSFUL .....	5

18. What do you see as the major strength of expedited service? Please explain.

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19. What do you see as the major problem with expedited service? Please explain.

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20. If you could make one change in Federal expedited service policy or procedures, what would it be? Please explain why you would make this change.

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21. People have suggested many kinds of changes to the Federal rules for expedited service. What do you think about each one of these suggested changes? **CIRCLE "YES" OR "NO" FOR EACH ITEM.**

	YES	NO	
A. Modify the 5 calendar day standard by:			
a. Extending it to 7 calendar days	1	2	
b. Changing it to 5 working days	1	2	
c. Returning to a 3 working-day rule	1	2	
d. Having more Federal guidelines for extending the deadline on a case-by-case basis... for example, if a client misses an interview	1	2	If "YES": For what types of situations would you like to see extensions permitted?
e. Would you like to see any other change to the current standard?	1	2	IF "YES", SPECIFY:
B. Eliminate any of the following expedited service entitlement criteria <u>entirely</u> :			
a. Homeless	1	2	
b. Migrant and seasonal farmworker	1	2	

	YES	NO	
c. Shelter expenses exceed income and liquid resources	1	2	
d. Gross income (<\$150) and asset (≤\$100) levels	1	2	
C. Broaden the expedited service entitlement criteria to include another household category	1	2	IF "YES": What category?
D. Make the following changes in the program definition of "homeless":			
a. Do not define as "homeless" persons in shelters or institutions that provide meals.	1	2	
b. Restrict the definition of "temporary" for persons living temporarily in the residence of another individual.	1	2	IF "YES": What type of time limit would you suggest?  _____ MONTHS
c. For persons living temporarily in the residence of another individual, limit eligibility to persons living temporarily with a <u>nonfamily</u> member.	1	2	
d. Would you <u>expand</u> the definition of "homeless" in any way?	1	2	IF "YES": In what way?
e. Would you change anything (else) about the program definition of "homeless"?	1	2	IF "YES": SPECIFY
E. Change the \$150 gross income limit for expedited service to some other amount	1	2	IF "YES": To what amount?
F. Change the \$100 asset limit for expedited service to some other amount	1	2	IF "YES": To what amount?
G. Tie income and asset limits to family size	1	2	







**APPENDIX B**

**COMPARISONS TO 1987 STUDY**





## Exhibit B.1

EXPEDITED CASES AS A PERCENTAGE OF APPROVED APPLICANTS,  
BY OFFICE SIZE: 1987 STUDY VERSUS CURRENT STUDY

	Expedited Cases as a Percentage of Approved Applicants
February 1983 - May 1984 <sup>a</sup>	
Large (1,900 or more cases)	37.3*
Moderate (660 to 1,899 cases)	26.2
Small (659 or fewer cases)	25.2
Total	34.0
Unweighted N	2434
October 1991 - September 1992	
Large (2,593 or more cases)	37.9
Medium (1,049 to 2,592 cases)	30.1
Small (300 to 1,048)	28.5
Total	34.9
Unweighted N	4497
August - September 1993	
Large (2,593 or more cases)	44.2
Medium (1,049 to 2,592 cases)	43.6
Small (300 to 1,048)	31.7†
Total	42.6
Unweighted N	3695

<sup>a</sup> 1987 Study

\* Significantly different from other subcategories at the 0.05 level.

† Significantly different from Large at the 0.05 level and from Medium at the 0.10 level.

## Exhibit B.2

**HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS OF APPROVED APPLICANTS,  
EXPEDITED SERVICE CASES AND REGULAR CASES:  
1987 STUDY VERSUS CURRENT STUDY**

	Feb. 1983 - May 1984 <sup>a</sup>		Oct. 1991 - Sept. 1992 and Aug - Sept. 1993	
	Expedited Cases	Regular Cases	Expedited Cases	Regular Cases
Mean amount:				
Monthly gross income (\$)	\$51**	\$407	\$154***	\$532
Liquid resources (\$)	\$9**	\$65	\$22***	\$96
Monthly earned income (\$)	\$22**	\$192	\$47***	\$272
Monthly unearned income (\$)	\$29**	\$216	\$106***	\$258
Household size	2.1**	3.0	1.9***	2.6
Age of head	32	37	33***	36
Percentage of cases:				
One-person households	51.2**	25.4	56.2***	32.7
With children	39.3**	70.4	38.0***	60.8
Female-headed with children	20.6	32.1	24.4***	32.9
Percentage of cases receiving:				
Earnings	12.2**	28.5	13.0***	37.9
AFDC	3.2**	20.3	9.3***	13.2
Social Security	0.9	13.0	1.7***	11.3
Unemployment compensation	2.5**	12.0	3.6***	8.1
Unweighted N	1348	1086	5307	2885

<sup>a</sup> 1987 Study.

\*\* Significantly different from regular cases at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* Significantly different from regular cases at the 0.01 level.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **COMPARISONS OF 1991-1992 AND 1993 SAMPLES**





## Exhibit C.1

**DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF APPROVED FOOD STAMP APPLICANTS:  
EXPEDITED SERVICE VERSUS REGULARLY PROCESSED,  
SEPARATELY FOR 1991-1992 AND 1993 SAMPLES**

	October 1991- September 1992		August-September 1993	
	Expedited Service	Regularly- Processed	Expedited Service	Regularly- Processed
<i>Characteristics of Household Head</i>				
Gender				
Male	44.2%	26.5%	45.9%	26.4%
Female	55.8	73.5	54.1	73.6
Race				
White	56.1%	54.3%	55.4%	56.9%
African American	31.5	32.1	31.0	25.4
Hispanic	10.1	11.9	10.8	14.5
Asian	0.8	0.4	0.5	1.4
American Indian	1.2	1.1	1.9	1.8
Other	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.0
Age—mean	33	36	33	36
< 18	2.2%	2.4%	2.0%	2.3%
18-24	23.8	21.9	22.1	19.7
25-34	35.9	32.5	35.0	33.6
35-44	22.8	21.1	25.2	23.2
45-59	12.2	12.2	14.6	12.7
≥ 60	3.0	10.1	1.2	8.7
Marital status				
Never married	40.9%	31.3%	46.3%	26.9%
Married	23.4	35.4	18.0	35.9
Divorced	15.6	13.4	17.5	16.0
Separated	17.9	13.3	16.3	15.7
Widowed	2.2	6.5	1.9	5.4
Disabled	8.7%	17.0%	7.7%	13.7%
Received food stamps previously	37.4%	45.3%	53.6%	50.9%
Received expedited service previously	15.2%	7.6%	29.7%	13.1%

Exhibit C.1 (cont.)

	October 1991- September 1992		August-September 1993	
	Expedited Service	Regularly- Processed	Expedited Service	Regularly- Processed
<i>Characteristics of Household</i>				
Size of household—mean	1.9	2.6	1.8	2.6
1 person	53.5%	32.9%	59.7%	32.4%
2 persons	21.8	21.3	18.3	22.8
3-4 persons	19.9	34.4	18.3	33.5
5 or more	5.0	11.4	3.6	11.2
Household composition				
Single person, no children <sup>a</sup>	50.5%	31.5%	57.3%	30.0%
Single parent with children	28.3	34.3	25.4	35.2
Married couple/parents with children	8.4	20.6	7.4	20.7
Multiple adults, without children	3.5	2.6	3.3	2.6
Multiple adults, with children	3.1	5.5	3.2	5.4
Married couple without children	4.0	3.8	2.5	4.6
Other	2.2	1.8	1.0	1.5
Female-headed with children	25.9%	33.0%	22.6%	32.8%
Unweighted N	2934	1563	2373	1322

<sup>a</sup> Missing data on household composition make this category not identical to one-person households.

## Exhibit C.2

**INCOME, ASSETS, AND SHELTER EXPENSES OF APPROVED FOOD STAMP APPLICANTS:  
EXPEDITED SERVICE VS. REGULARLY PROCESSED,  
SEPARATELY FOR 1991-1992 AND 1993 SAMPLES**

	Expedited Service	Regularly Processed	All
<i>October 1991-September 1992</i>			
Monthly gross income:			
Mean amount	\$157	\$503	\$383
Percent with zero income	53.4%	16.3%	29.2%
Income relative to poverty level	0.19	0.55	0.43
Earnings:			
Mean amount	\$46	\$262	\$187
Percent receiving	13.0%	36.7%	28.4%
Unearned income:			
Mean amount	\$111	\$241	\$196
Percent receiving	35.7%	56.8%	49.4%
Total assets:			
Mean amount	\$46	\$167	\$125
Percent reporting zero assets	81.2%	67.9%	72.5%
Liquid resources:			
Mean amount	\$21	\$92	\$68
Percent holding	16.8%	28.7%	24.6%
Total shelter expenses:			
Mean amount	\$271	\$340	\$316
Percent reporting no shelter expenses	31.6%	12.1%	18.9%
Unweighted N	2934	1563	4497
<i>August-September 1993</i>			
Monthly gross income:			
Mean amount	\$150	\$580	\$396
Percent with zero income	54.6%	11.1%	29.6%
Income relative to poverty level	0.19	0.65	0.45
Earnings:			
Mean amount	\$48	\$291	\$188
Percent receiving	13.0%	39.9%	28.4%
Unearned income:			
Mean amount	\$101	\$289	\$209
Percent receiving	34.7%	58.9%	48.6%
Total assets:			
Mean amount	\$76	\$176	\$134
Percent reporting zero assets	80.4%	59.0%	68.1%
Liquid resources:			
Mean amount	\$22	\$103	\$69
Percent holding	17.4%	37.9%	29.1%
Total shelter expenses:			
Mean amount	\$239	\$379	\$319
Percent reporting no shelter expenses	38.4%	9.6%	21.9%
Unweighted N	2373	1322	3695

Exhibit C.3

APPROVED APPLICANTS RECEIVING EXPEDITED SERVICE,  
BY ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA,  
SEPARATELY FOR 1991-1992 AND 1993 SAMPLES

	Percentage Distribution of Approved Applicants Receiving Expedited Service	
	Duplicated	Unduplicated
<i>October 1991 - September 1992</i>		
Monthly income/resources below guidelines	90.3%	90.3%
Destitute migrant/ seasonal worker	1.2	0.1
"McKinney criteria"		
Homeless	22.3	2.5
Shelter expenses exceed income/resources	<u>60.1</u>	<u>7.1</u>
Total	> 100.0%	100.0%
Unweighted N	2885	2885
<i>August - September 1993</i>		
Monthly income/resources below guidelines	90.3%	90.3%
Destitute migrant/seasonal farmworker	2.3	0.2
"McKinney criteria"		
Homeless	26.6	2.4
Shelter expenses exceed income/resources	<u>50.6</u>	<u>7.1</u>
Total	> 100.0%	100.0%
Unweighted N	2349	2349



Exhibit C.4

**TIMELINESS OF BENEFIT AUTHORIZATION,  
BY EXPEDITED SERVICE STATUS,  
SEPARATELY FOR 1991-1992 AND 1993 SAMPLES**

Number of Days Between Application and Authorization of Benefits	October 1991- September 1992		August-September 1993	
	Expedited Service	Regularly- Processed	Expedited Service	Regularly- Processed
Same day	36.6%	23.7%	39.0%	18.3%
1	16.1	3.9	16.7	4.6
2	7.0	3.1	9.3	4.2
3	6.1	2.6	6.5	3.1
4	4.0	2.4	3.5	3.4
5	3.4	1.6	4.1	2.8
Within 5 days	73.2	37.2	79.1	36.4
6-10	10.3	14.2	7.9	16.2
11-20	7.6	18.6	5.8	23.6
21-30	6.3	18.5	5.6	18.2
31-60	1.9	8.8	1.7	5.2
61 +	<u>0.7</u>	<u>2.7</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.4</u>
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Mean	6.7	16.5	4.4**	12.1
Unweighted N	2915	1550	2349	1318

\*\* Significantly different from October 1991 - September 1992 at 0.05 level.

## Exhibit C.5

**ACCURACY OF EXPEDITED SERVICE SCREENING,  
SEPARATELY FOR 1991-1992 AND 1993 SAMPLES**

	Qualified for Expedited Service		
	Yes	No	Total
<b><i>October 1991-September 1992<sup>a</sup></i></b>			
Received expedited service			
Yes	29.3%	5.6%	34.9%
No	<u>22.8</u>	<u>42.4</u>	<u>65.2</u>
Total	52.1	48.0	100.0%
Received expedited service—adjusted			
Yes	38.8%	5.6%	44.4%
No	<u>13.3</u>	<u>42.4</u>	<u>55.6</u>
Total	52.1	48.0	100.0%
<b><i>August-September 1993<sup>b</sup></i></b>			
Received expedited service			
Yes	37.0%	5.6%	42.6%
No	<u>16.4</u>	<u>40.9</u>	<u>57.4</u>
Total	53.5	46.5	100.0%
Received expedited service—adjusted			
Yes	43.2%	5.6%	48.7%
No	<u>10.3</u>	<u>40.9</u>	<u>51.3</u>
Total	53.5	46.5	100.0%

<sup>a</sup> Unweighted N = 4497.<sup>b</sup> Unweighted N = 3695.

## Exhibit C.6

**CHANGE IN MONTHLY BENEFIT AMOUNT BETWEEN FIRST AND THIRD MONTHS OF  
INITIAL CERTIFICATION, BY EXPEDITED SERVICE STATUS,  
SEPARATELY FOR 1991-1992 AND 1993 SAMPLES**

	Termination or Benefit Decrease			Benefit Increase	No Change	Total
	Termination	Benefit Decrease	Either			
October 1991-September 1992						
Expedited service cases						
Verification postponed	21.9%	14.3%	36.1%	8.1%	55.8%	100.0%
Verification not postponed	15.0	10.3	25.3	9.4	65.3	100.0
All	17.8	11.8	29.6	8.7	61.8	100.0
Expedited service cases, McKinney only:						
Verification postponed	31.0	18.3	49.3	12.9	37.8	100.0
Verification not postponed	17.9	6.2	24.1	10.1	65.8	100.0
All	22.4	12.0	34.5	10.8	54.8	100.0
Regular cases	8.1	12.2	20.2	11.5	68.3	100.0
August-September 1993						
Expedited service cases						
Verification postponed	20.7	12.0	32.7	13.8	53.5	100.0
Verification not postponed	8.5	6.9	15.4	6.7	77.9	100.0
All	13.7	9.1	22.8	9.8	67.4	100.0
Expedited service cases, McKinney only:						
Verification postponed	28.3	10.7	38.9	21.2	39.9	100.0
Verification not postponed	5.0	1.8	6.7	16.4	76.9	100.0
All	15.2	6.7	21.8	19.0	59.2	100.0
Regular cases	8.3%	9.6%	17.9%	18.0%	64.1%	100.0%





**APPENDIX D**

**SUPPLEMENTARY EXHIBITS**



## Exhibit D.1

**INCOME, ASSETS, AND SHELTER EXPENSES OF APPROVED FOOD STAMP APPLICANTS:  
EXPEDITED SERVICE VS. REGULARLY PROCESSED, BY OFFICE SIZE**

	Expedited Service	Regularly Processed	All
<i>Large</i>			
Monthly gross income:			
Mean amount	\$169 ***	\$497	\$365
Percent with zero income	51.7 %***	15.7 %	30.3 %
Income relative to poverty level	0.21 ***	0.57	0.42
Earnings:			
Mean amount	\$47 ***	\$220	\$150
Percent receiving	10.7 %***	31.0 %	22.8 %
Unearned income:			
Mean amount	\$123 ***	\$277	\$215
Percent receiving	39.5 %**	60.7 %	52.1 %
Total assets:			
Mean amount	\$60 **	\$115	\$93
Percent reporting zero assets	83.3 %**	70.8 %	75.9
Liquid resources:			
Mean amount	\$17 ***	\$73	\$51
Percent holding	14.1 %**	26.7 %	21.6 %
Total shelter expenses:			
Mean amount	\$280 ***	\$377	\$338
Percent reporting no shelter expenses	31.1 %***	10.7 %	18.9 %
Unweighted N	3616	1881	5497
<i>Medium</i>			
Monthly gross income:			
Mean amount	\$119 ***	\$589	\$425
Percent with zero income	58.8 %***	13.0 %	29.0 %
Income relative to poverty level	0.14 ***	0.63	0.46
Earnings:			
Mean amount	\$50 ***	\$376	\$262
Percent receiving	18.4 %***	50.9 %	39.6 %
Unearned income:			
Mean amount	\$69 ***	\$213	\$162
Percent receiving	25.3 %***	49.1 %	40.8 %
Total assets:			
Mean amount	\$49 **	\$216	\$158
Percent reporting zero assets	79.0 %***	58.6 %	65.7 %
Liquid resources:			
Mean amount	\$28 ***	\$111	\$82
Percent holding	20.3 %***	37.3 %	31.4 %

Exhibit D.1 (cont.)

	Expedited Service	Regularly Processed	All
Total shelter expenses:			
Mean amount	\$210 ***	\$326	\$285
Percent reporting no shelter expenses	43.3 %***	12.0 %	22.9 %
Unweighted N	1246	681	1927
<i>Small</i>			
Monthly gross income:			
Mean amount	\$145 ***	\$561	\$434
Percent with zero income	56.5 %***	10.0 %	24.1 %
Income relative to poverty level	0.18 ***	0.62	0.48
Earnings:			
Mean amount	\$41 ***	\$262	\$195
Percent receiving	13.2 %***	38.3 %	30.7 %
Unearned income:			
Mean amount	\$105 ***	\$299	\$240
Percent receiving	33.2 %***	66.1 %	56.1 %
Total assets:			
Mean amount	\$106 ***	\$371	\$291
Percent reporting zero assets	63.9 %***	44.5 %	50.4 %
Liquid resources:			
Mean amount	\$50 ***	\$190	\$147
Percent holding	33.0 %***	49.9 %	44.8 %
Total shelter expenses:			
Mean amount	\$210 ***	\$305	\$276
Percent reporting no shelter expenses	35.0 %***	11.8 %	18.9 %
Unweighted N	445	323	768

\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.10 level.

\*\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* Significantly different from regularly-processed cases at the 0.01 level.



**Exhibit D.2**  
**EXPEDITED SERVICE ENTITLEMENT CRITERIA,**  
**BY OFFICE SIZE**

	Percentage Distribution of Approved Applicants Receiving Expedited Services	
	Duplicated	Unduplicated
<b>Large</b>		
Monthly income/resources below limits	89.5%	89.5%
Destitute migrant/seasonal worker	0.6	0.0
"McKinney criteria:		
Homeless	25.1	2.4
Shelter expenses exceed income/resources	<u>55.3</u>	<u>8.1</u>
Total	> 100.0%	100.0%
Unweighted N	3558	3558
<b>Medium</b>		
Monthly income/resources below limits	91.8%	91.8%
Destitute migrant/seasonal worker	4.5	0.4
"McKinney criteria:		
Homeless	22.1	2.6
Shelter expenses exceed income/resources	<u>56.4</u>	<u>5.3</u>
Total	> 100.0%	100.0%
Unweighted N	1235	1235
<b>Small</b>		
Monthly income/resources below limits	92.5%	92.5%
Destitute migrant/seasonal worker	1.9	0.0
"McKinney criteria:		
Homeless	24.7	2.2
Shelter expenses exceed income/resources	<u>58.1</u>	<u>5.3</u>
Total	> 100.0%	100.0%
Unweighted N	441	441

**NOTE:** None of the observed differences between the percentage of cases added by the McKinney act is statistically significant.

**Exhibit D.3**  
**EXPEDITED SERVICE ENTITLEMENT CRITERIA,**  
**BY OFFICE TYPE**

	Percentage Distribution of Approved Applicants Receiving Expedited Services	
	Duplicated	Unduplicated
<b>Metropolitan</b>		
Monthly income/resources below limits	91.1%	91.1%
Destitute migrant/seasonal worker	1.9	0.1
"McKinney criteria:		
Homeless	25.4	2.3
Shelter expenses exceed income/resources	<u>57.2</u>	<u>6.4</u>
Total	> 100.0%	100.0%
Unweighted N	4072	4072
<b>Non-Metropolitan</b>		
Monthly income/resources below limits	86.9%	86.9%
Destitute migrant/seasonal worker	1.0	0.0
"McKinney criteria:		
Homeless	19.5	3.1
Shelter expenses exceed income/resources	<u>49.9</u>	<u>10.0</u>
Total	> 100.0%	100.0%
Unweighted N	1162	1162

**NOTE:** The observed difference between the percentage of cases added by the McKinney Act is not statistically significant.

## Exhibit D.4

**LINEAR PROBABILITY MODELS OF LIKELIHOOD  
OF EARLY TERMINATION OR BENEFIT DECREASE**

	Termination	Termination or Benefit Decrease
Expedited service status (Omitted category: Regular cases)		
Non-McKinney, verification postponed	0.0546*** (0.0121)	0.0835*** (0.0150)
Non-McKinney, verification not postponed	-0.0187 (0.0119)	-0.0177 (0.0147)
McKinney, verification postponed	0.0950*** (0.0241)	0.0869*** (0.0298)
McKinney, verification not postponed	-0.0093 (0.0266)	-0.0619* (0.0329)
Certification period less than three months	0.2946*** (0.0119)	0.3417*** (0.0147)
Age of case head (Omitted category: ages 25-34)		
Under 18	0.0096 (0.0286)	0.0414 (0.0354)
18 to 24	0.0178* (0.0107)	0.0185 (0.0132)
35 to 44	0.0030 (0.0103)	0.0010 (0.0127)
45 to 59	-0.0135 (0.0132)	-0.0016 (0.0163)
60 or over	-0.0194 (0.0225)	-0.0115 (0.0278)
Race of case head (Omitted category: White)		
Black	-0.0210* (0.0110)	-0.0046 (0.0136)
Hispanic	-0.0292** (0.0142)	-0.0511*** (0.0176)
Other non-white	-0.0474* (0.0252)	-0.0491 (0.0311)

## Exhibit D.4 (cont.)

	Termination	Termination or Benefit Decrease
Other demographics of case head		
Male	0.0394*** (0.0094)	0.0325*** (0.0116)
Disabled	-0.0451*** (0.0143)	-0.0057 (0.0177)
Homeless	0.0428*** (0.0110)	0.0306** (0.0136)
Food stamp history		
Prior receipt of food stamps	-0.0208 (0.0133)	-0.0047 (0.0165)
Prior receipt of food stamps missing	-0.0138 (0.0217)	0.0180 (0.0269)
Prior receipt of expedited service	0.0061 (0.0162)	-0.0054 (0.0200)
Prior receipt of expedited service missing	0.0113 (0.0157)	0.0174 (0.0194)
Household type (Omitted category: Single adults)		
Single parent with children	-0.0107 (0.0132)	-0.0012 (0.0163)
Married couple/parent with children	0.0122 (0.0181)	0.0032 (0.0224)
Married couple without children	-0.0091 (0.0227)	-0.0031 (0.0281)
Multiple adults with children	0.0011 (0.0234)	-0.0286 (0.0290)
Multiple adults without children	0.0209 (0.0235)	0.0138 (0.0291)
Other, non-single	0.0020 (0.0292)	-0.0161 (0.0362)
Household type missing	0.0064 (0.0324)	0.0432 (0.0400)



Exhibit D.4 (cont.)

	Termination	Termination or Benefit Decrease
Income and assets		
Any countable assets	0.0089 (0.0101)	0.0179 (0.0125)
Zero income	0.0695*** (0.0124)	0.0336** (0.0154)
Any earnings	0.0476*** (0.0126)	0.0568*** (0.0156)
Gross income (\$100)	0.0016 (0.0019)	0.0034 (0.0023)
Food stamp allotment (\$100)	-0.0107* (0.0057)	0.0622*** (0.0071)
R <sup>2</sup> (no intercept)	0.1283	0.1137
Unweighted N	7100	7100

Standard errors are in parentheses.

- \*\*\* Statistically significant at the 0.01 percent level.
- \*\* Statistically significant at the 0.05 percent level.
- \* Statistically significant at the 0.10 percent level.

Missing data was a serious problem for some of these variables. Rather than delete the observations, missing data indicators were created for the three measures for which the problem was severe: household type, prior receipt of food stamps, and prior receipt of expedited services.

Because certification period length is also included in the model, the coefficients on the household characteristics variables cannot be interpreted as the effects of these factors on the likelihood of a termination or benefit decrease. Instead, they represent the effects of household characteristics that are not captured by the certification period assignment.

The data on which these analyses are based come from 59 sites throughout the country. Variations in termination and benefit reduction rates among the sites are likely, both because of differences in administrative practices and because of differences in the local economies. We have not tried to estimate these effects directly. Instead, we have implicitly estimated fixed effects models by grouping the data by site, expressing each variable as its deviation from the mean for that site, and analyzing the deviations. The models are estimated without intercepts.

## Exhibit D.5

UNWEIGHTED LOGISTIC MODEL OF THE LIKELIHOOD THAT A  
REGULARLY-PROCESSED CASE IS OVERPAID OR INELIGIBLE

	Logistic Coefficient (Standard Error)	Impact at Sample Mean
Proportion of cases in the office that receive expedited service	-0.0143 (0.2893)	-0.0002
Any earnings	0.6890 *** (0.1513)	0.1100 ***
Number of adults in the household	0.0730 (0.0828)	0.0117
Food stamp case size	0.1106 *** (0.0428)	0.0177 ***
Any aliens in the household	-0.2703 (0.3948)	-0.0431
Any excess shelter deduction	0.3893 *** (0.1294)	0.0621 ***
Zero income	0.0994 (0.2438)	0.0159
Receipt of AFDC	-0.0281 (0.1393)	-0.0045
Any liquid assets	0.1668 (0.1371)	0.0266
Any medical expenses	0.0201 (0.3331)	0.0032
Office is in metropolitan area	0.3147 (0.2453)	0.0502
Intercept	-2.6712	
Mean of dependent variable (weighted)	0.1994	
Chi-squared for covariates	55.44	
Sample size	2,279	

\*\*\* Statistically significant at the 0.01 level

\*\* Statistically significant at the 0.05 level

\* Statistically significant at the 0.10 level

Case characteristics as reported in case record.

## Exhibit D.6

ISSUES IN EXPEDITED SERVICE PROCESSING:  
LOCAL OFFICE PERSPECTIVE<sup>a</sup>

Issue	Percent Responding					Mean Rating
	Not a Problem 1	2	3	4	Major Problem 5	
<b><i>Expedited service criteria</i></b>						
Applicants not in urgent need of emergency assistance receiving expedited service processing	17.9%	37.3%	21.4%	11.1%	12.2%	2.6
Applicants in urgent need of food assistance not receiving expedited service processing under current rules	50.9	34.2	9.4	5.5	—	1.7
Difficulty determining whether applicants meet expedited service criteria	62.8	18.1	10.7	5.9	2.5	1.7
<b><i>Processing expedited service applications</i></b>						
Postponed verification, making verification process more complicated	25.3%	37.4%	17.3%	14.4%	5.6%	2.4
Arranging schedule to handle the necessary expedited service interviews each day	44.1	16.3	18.7	12.2	8.7	2.3
Joint processing of expedited service cases also applying for AFDC	41.3	23.0	12.8	13.3	9.6	2.3
Applicants qualifying for expedited service failing to bring verification due to complicated application forms	51.6	23.2	7.3	12.6	5.3	2.0
Meeting the five calendar day processing standard	51.2	21.1	15.1	10.1	2.5	1.9
Difficulty moving between rules for processing regular and expedited service cases	48.6	23.8	17.8	6.2	3.5	1.9

Exhibit D.6 (cont.)

Issue	Percent Responding					Mean Rating
	Not a Problem 1	2	3	4	Major Problem 5	
<b><i>Related to applicant behavior or circumstances</i></b>						
Applicants intentionally misrepresenting circumstances to appear entitled to expedited service	9.6%	41.5%	25.0%	10.4%	13.5%	2.8
Expedited service applicants failing to appear for certification interview	38.2	34.9	17.2	9.6	—	2.0
Applicants to be screened or interviewed waiting too long in the office	48.1	30.2	15.2	4.5	2.0	1.8
Many applicants being entitled to expedited service receiving benefits for only one month, suggesting that they are not in need of emergency assistance	58.8	26.7	12.6	—	1.9	1.6
Households receiving benefits in more than one county or service area within the same month	71.2	13.0	7.7	8.1	—	1.5
Approved expedited service applicants failing to pick up first month's benefits	81.0	16.6	1.6	—	0.8	1.2

<sup>a</sup> Number of respondents = 59; responses weighted by the reciprocal of the office's probability of selection.



## Exhibit D.7

**ISSUES IN EXPEDITED SERVICE PROCESSING:  
FOOD STAMP WORKER PERSPECTIVE<sup>a</sup>**

Issue	Percent Ranking Issue as One of Three Most Serious Problems
<p><b><i>Expedited service criteria</i></b></p> <p>Applicants not in urgent need of emergency assistance receiving expedited service processing</p> <p>Applicants in urgent need of food assistance not receiving expedited service processing under current rules</p> <p>Difficulty determining whether applicants meet expedited service criteria</p>	<p align="center">24.1 %</p> <p align="center">12.5</p> <p align="center">12.2</p>
<p><b><i>Processing expedited service applications</i></b></p> <p>Postponed verification, making verification process more complicated</p> <p>Arranging schedule to handle the necessary expedited service interviews each day</p> <p>Joint processing of expedited service cases also applying for AFDC</p> <p>Applicants qualifying for expedited service failing to bring verification due to complicated application forms</p> <p>Meeting the five calendar day processing standard</p> <p>Difficulty moving between rules for processing regular and expedited service cases</p>	<p align="center">23.8</p> <p align="center">27.1</p> <p align="center">9.4</p> <p align="center">9.5</p> <p align="center">26.1</p> <p align="center">5.7</p>

## Exhibit D.7 (cont.)

Issue	Percent Ranking Issue as One of Three Most Serious Problems
<i>Related to applicant behavior or circumstances</i>	
Applicants intentionally misrepresenting circumstances to appear entitled to expedited service	53.3
Expedited service applicants failing to appear for certification interview	16.4
Applicants to be screened or interviewed waiting too long in the office	7.9
Many applicants being entitled to expedited service receiving benefits for only one month, suggesting that they are not in need of emergency assistance	4.6
Households receiving benefits in more than one county or service area within the same month	8.8
Approved expedited service applicants failing to pick up first month's benefits	2.7

<sup>a</sup> Number of respondents = 417; responses weighted to take into account workers' selection probabilities.

## Exhibit D.8

## PROBLEMS REPORTED TO LOCAL ADVOCACY GROUPS BY FOOD STAMP APPLICANTS

Problems	Percent Responding <sup>a</sup>		
	Not a Problem	Problem	
		Mentioned Only with Prompting	Mentioned without Prompting
<b>Screening</b>			
Applicants not being told about expedited service	53.3	17.1	29.6
Applicants to be screened or interviewed waiting too long in the office	53.5	18.4	28.0
Screening procedures not being good	56.5	23.1	20.4
<b>Application form</b>			
Application form being too complicated	43.7	30.3	26.0
Applicants for PA needing two separate applications or interviews	67.5	20.9	11.7
<b>Verification</b>			
Verification requirements being complicated	48.2	22.2	29.6
Expedited service applicants being required to provide verification other than identity to get first month's benefits	51.9	24.8	23.3
Workers not telling applicants when verification items are due	81.3	5.7	13.0
<b>Benefits</b>			
Prorated benefits not being sufficient to meet food needs	36.4	35.7	27.9
Applicants not receiving expedited service benefits within five days	66.6	13.8	19.6
<b>General office</b>			
Applicants having trouble getting answers to their questions	47.7	19.8	32.6
Office not having enough qualified staff	43.4	30.4	26.2
Applicants having to return to the office too many times	55.4	19.6	25.0

<sup>a</sup> Number of respondents = 58.

## Exhibit D.9

RECOMMENDED CHANGES IN FEDERAL EXPEDITED SERVICE POLICY<sup>a</sup>

Changes to Policies	Percent Recommending Change <sup>b</sup>			
	Local Officials	State Officials	Food Stamp Workers	Advocacy Groups
<b><i>Modify five calendar day standard by</i></b>				
Changing it to five working days	59.9	42.3	65.5	12.5
Extending it to seven calendar days	16.8	11.5	31.5	4.2
Returning to three working days	13.9	3.8	11.8	68.5
Having federal guidelines for extending deadline on a case-by-case basis	30.8	38.5	32.4	49.6
Shortening it to 24 hours or less	6.0	0.0	0.0	11.7
<b><i>Eliminate following entitlement criteria entirely</i></b>				
Shelter expenses exceed income and liquid resources	35.3	34.6	40.7	15.2
Destitute migrant and seasonal farm-workers	21.2	26.9	33.8	6.8
Homeless	12.1	26.9	13.8	4.9
Income and assets	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b><i>Modify definition of "homeless"</i></b>				
Exclude those living in shelters and institutions that provide food	65.5	38.5	67.3	19.1
Exclude or limit the definition of "temporary" for those living temporarily in the residence of another individual	51.1	61.5	69.7	21.2
Exclude those living temporarily with a relative	42.9	34.6	60.6	7.6
Narrow definition in some other way	18.3	15.4	4.2	4.1
Expand definition of "homeless"	3.8	3.8	5.9	16.1



Exhibit D.9 (cont.)

Changes to Policies	Percent Recommending Change <sup>b</sup>			
	Local Officials	State Officials	Food Stamp Workers	Advocacy Groups
<b><i>Broaden entitlement criteria</i></b>	12.6	15.4	11.7	49.0
<b><i>Change income and asset limits</i></b>				
Tie to family size	48.9	15.4	48.1	71.4
Raise income limit	25.2	11.5	9.5	33.1
Lower income limit	7.9	3.9	9.3	4.2
Change income limit, direction not specified	0.0	11.5	9.5	27.2
Raise asset limit	18.5	7.7	4.5	35.0
Lower asset limit	4.7	3.9	7.4	0.0
Change asset limit, direction not specified	0.0	7.7	9.1	17.3
<b><i>Change verification requirements</i></b>				
Require additional items prior to first issuance	29.9	23.1	40.3	14.4
Eliminate postponed verification entirely	20.3	11.5	46.0	11.9
Eliminate the requirement to verify identity	0.6	0.0	1.2	18.3
Unweighted number of respondents	59	26	417	58

<sup>a</sup> Multiple responses are permitted.<sup>b</sup> State responses are unweighted; all others are weighted.



**APPENDIX E**

**NATIONAL ESTIMATES OF PRESUMPTIVE OVERPAYMENT  
ERROR**





## APPENDIX E

### NATIONAL ESTIMATES OF PRESUMPTIVE OVERPAYMENT ERROR

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We estimate that the presumptive overpayment error among expedited cases with postponed verification amounts nationally to between \$14 million and \$30 million per year. Exhibit E.1 shows the calculations, which are explained below. All estimates are based on FY 1992 data.

The first step in this analysis is to estimate the average monthly number of approved applicants receiving expedited service with postponed verification. To compute this, we multiply the average monthly national caseload, 10.06 million households, by the following three factors:

- approved applicants as a percentage of average monthly cases, which we have estimated from the 1992 national QC data at 5.0 percent;
- expedited cases as a percentage of approved applicants (the expedited service rate), estimated at 34.9 percent (Exhibit 2.1); and
- the percentage of expedited cases that have postponed verification, estimated at 46.6 percent.

These assumptions imply that 81,618 households are approved each month with expedited service and postponed verification. This calculation serves as the starting point for the estimates in Exhibit E.1, for both ineligibility error and overissuance error.

The second step is to apply our estimate of the proportion of postponed verification cases whose pattern of benefit change suggests overpayment error (Exhibit 5.3). For ineligibility, this proportion is the difference between postponed verification cases and regular cases in the rate of early termination. One can compute this from Exhibit 5.3 either on an unadjusted basis (21.3 percent minus 8.1 percent, or 13.2 percent) or on an adjusted basis (16.2 percent minus 10.3 percent, or 5.9 percent). The adjusted estimates take account of the effects on termination of case demographic characteristics, length of certification period, and site location. We show in Exhibit E.1 the calculation of presumptive error under both the unadjusted and adjusted approaches. For overissuance, the relevant estimates are those for benefit reduction

## Exhibit E.1

## PRESUMPTIVE OVERPAYMENT ERROR AMONG EXPEDITED SERVICE CASES

	Unadjusted Estimate	Adjusted Estimate
<b><i>Ineligibility Error</i></b>		
Average monthly approved applicants receiving expedited service with postponed verification (see text)	81,618	81,618
Rate of third-month termination attributable to postponed verification (from Exhibit 5.3)	× 0.132	× 0.059
Average monthly error amount for those with presumptive error (\$167 times 1.25 months)	× \$209	× \$209
(1) Total monthly error amount	= \$2.3 million	= \$1.0 million
<b><i>Overissuance Error</i></b>		
Average monthly approved applicants receiving expedited service with postponed verification (see text)	81,816	81,816
Rate of third-month benefit decrease attributable to postponed verification (from Exhibit 5.3)	× 0.020	× 0.025
Average monthly error amount for those with presumptive error (\$75 times 1.25 months)	× \$94	× \$94
(2) Total monthly error amount	= \$0.2 million	= \$0.2 million
<b><i>Presumptive Overpayment Error (ineligibility and overissuance)</i></b>		
(1 + 2) Total monthly error amount	\$2.5 million	\$1.2 million
Total annual error amount	\$30.0 million	\$14.4 million
As a percentage of:		
Total issuance to active cases	0.15 percent	0.07 percent
First- and second-month issuances to approved applicants	1.75 percent	0.84 percent

between the first and third months—2.0 percent unadjusted and 2.5 percent adjusted.<sup>1</sup> We discuss below the choice between the unadjusted and adjusted figures.

The third step is to calculate the dollar error for cases with presumptive error. For the monthly amount of ineligibility error we use \$167, the average first-month allotment for

1. Rates of benefit reduction obtained by subtracting termination rates from rates of termination or benefit decrease.



expedited cases with postponed verification. For overissuance error we use \$75, the average first- to third-month benefit reduction for those postponed verification cases that experience a benefit reduction. For both ineligibility and overissuance, we assume that errors have an average duration of 1.25 months. This recognizes two possibilities: (1) termination or benefit reduction may have occurred in either the second or third month; and (2) cases applying in the latter half of a month would have received an initial issuance combining the prorated first-month benefit with the full second-month benefit.

The final step of the calculation, shown at the bottom of Exhibit E.1, is to sum the ineligibility and overissuance errors. Expressed in annual terms (multiplying by 12), the amount of presumptive overpayment error ranges from \$14 to \$30 million. Expressed as a percentage of total issuances to active cases—i.e., in the same terms as the FY 1992 national overpayment error rate of 8.19 percent—the presumptive error rate ranges from 0.07 to 0.15 percent.

Because presumptive error occurs only in the first and second months' issuances, it is useful also to express presumptive error as a percentage of the value of those issuances. The bottom row of Exhibit E.1 shows that this statistic ranges from 0.84 to 1.75 percent. These percentages compare with an overpayment error rate of 6.88 percent for approved cases in their first or second month of initial certification, as computed from the national QC sample for FY 1992. (Thus, if one includes the presumptive error, the overpayment error rate would rise from 6.88 percent to between 7.72 and 8.63 percent.)

A key issue that arises in the second step of these calculations is whether to apply the unadjusted or adjusted estimates in Exhibit 5.3. Because one can make a case for either, we show both sets of estimates. Consider the findings for termination. In the unadjusted estimates, the difference in termination rates (between postponed verification cases and regular cases) is interpreted entirely as evidence of presumptive error, even though the expedited cases may have more changes in circumstances that would result in second- or third-month terminations without any error. The adjusted estimates, in contrast, remove the effect of client demographics, even though such characteristics may be correlated with client-caused errors at intake. Given these considerations, we show the alternative calculations and regard the two estimates as forming an illustrative range.

One should not treat the estimates as lower and upper bounds. Even the adjusted estimates might overstate the true error amount. For example, the included case-level



demographic variables may not fully account for the differences between expedited and regular cases in their propensity to undergo a change in circumstances. Alternatively, the unadjusted estimates might understate the true error amount. For example, some error may occur beyond the second month of certification if, for instance, postponed verification is never completed on a truly ineligible case and yet the household continues to receive benefits until recertification.

Even if one adopts the higher estimates, the amount of error attributable to postponed verification among expedited cases appears very limited. This is certainly true if presumptive overpayment error is expressed as a percentage of total issuances, but less true if expressed as a percentage of issuances to recently approved applicants.



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